THE SUBLIMITY OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

FATHER MORITZ MESCHLER S.J.

THE SUBLIMITY OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Imprimatur

Friburgi Brisgoviae, die Decembris 1908

✠ THOMAS ARCHIEPPS

Nihil obstat

E. THILL, S.J.

die 7 mensis Septembris 1908

THE SUBLIMITY OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST

ALSO

A VISIT TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ROME ON THE OCCASION OF THE JUBILEE

FIVE ESSAYS

BY

FATHER MORITZ MESCHLER, S.J.

Authorised translation by

A. C. CLARKE

ALMA COLLEGE
252.573
LIBRARY
M561
Los Gatos, Cal.

ALMA COLLEGE
LIBRARY
Alma, California

ST. LOUIS, MO.
B. HERDER, 17 SOUTH BROADWAY
LONDON, EDINBURGH & GLASGOW
SANDS & COMPANY
1911

62557

CONTENTS

	Page
I. On the Idea of Sacrifice	1
II. On the Beauty of the Eucharistic Sacrifice	31
III. On the Miraculous Multiplication of Bread, and Communion	60
IV. On the Perpetual Presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament . . .	89
V. On the Visits to the Seven Churches in Rome	117

The Sublimity of the Holy Eucharist

I

ON THE IDEA OF SACRIFICE

IN our holy Church there is one thing alone which deserves to be called the life, the soul, the epitome of religion regarded as a whole. We mean the Holy Eucharist.

Religion, taken in the widest sense of the word, denotes the mutual relation of God to man and of man to God. God disposes acts and ordinances which impose upon man a series of obligations and duties which we call by the name of Religion. This condescension of God to man, these acts on His part are the basis, the preliminary conditions and provisions of religion in man. Now the Holy Eucharist comprises the constituent parts, the whole bearing and import of the concept "Religion" in the sublimest meaning of the word. The Eucharist is, in fact, not merely the true, real and perpetual abode of God among men, it is also a sacrament and a sacrifice. In this threefold character it is both the last and most gracious approach of God to man, and

also the highest act of worship which man can offer for the honour and glory of the divine Majesty. Herewith enough has been said to indicate in what esteem he must hold the holy Mass, who is seriously desirous to worship God aright.

We shall now offer some reflections concerning the Eucharistic sacrifice.

It is perhaps our daily, or at least our frequent practice, and the one we love best to accomplish, to assist at holy Mass; it is besides for Catholics the essential and strict precept for the observance of Sunday. These are all reasons for the performance of this religious practice in the true spirit, with full understanding and with all possible devotion and perfection. Now in order to appreciate and value the Eucharistic sacrifice at its true worth, it is necessary, above all necessary, to have a correct and exhaustive idea of what a sacrifice is in general. The first truth which we have to hold fast and believe is, according to the decisions of the Councils (the fourth Lateran, can. 1, and the twenty-second session of the Council of Trent, can. 1), that it is a real and actual sacrifice. Thus without a correct conception of sacrifice in general, we cannot possibly apprehend the nature, the depth and the sublimity of the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

We shall, therefore, first endeavour to explain what a sacrifice is in general, and then draw some conclusions from the knowledge that has been gained.

The Sublimity of the Holy Eucharist

I

We can to a certain extent form an idea of the nature, the importance and the sublimity of sacrifice by these two truths; in the first place, by a sacrifice practical proof is given of the virtue of divine worship; and in the second place, of all acts of divine worship, sacrifice is the highest and most excellent.

The primary, actual and essential foundation and condition of religion is the existence of God as the author, creator, preserver, disposer, ruler and final end of all created things. We are creatures—*i.e.* not self-existent—our being is due to another; in fact, of ourselves is nothing, all is through the operation of others, ultimately by God and of God through creation. Of ourselves we merely have and are nothingness; all that is beyond this, our being, preservation, vital powers and our ultimate happiness, we owe to God. We stand in a real, substantial relation to God, and cannot ever or in any wise render ourselves independent of Him. The sovereignty is entirely unconditional and unlimited in virtue of which God, as creator, preserver, vivifier and benefactor, penetrates, embraces and asserts His right to our whole being, our life and our activity. With every display of our life and activity this dominion increases and strengthens its hold on us, as is beautifully expressed in the words of the prophet: "Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me; it is high, and I cannot reach to

it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" (Ps. cxxxviii. 6 *seq.*). No being reposes so irremovably in the bosom of its primary cause as man does in the bosom of God, continually deriving from Him what is necessary for perfecting his being and his life. Our Lord is God, and of His glory there is no end.

From the natural, positive fact of the dependence of our nature and our being on God, result of themselves important and far-reaching consequences for our spiritual life; nay, in all justice this physical relationship must also form the basis, the model and the rule of our moral attitude in regard to God. This is the task religion has to perform. It places man in the proper position towards God as his "principium," the author of his being and of his happiness, his first beginning and his final end, by rendering Him the recognition, the submission, the worship due to Him. But in order to be what it ought to be, this worship must include both the inner and the outer man; it does not consist merely in the inward acknowledgment of God by the understanding and the subjection of the will, but also in the duty of manifesting these inward dispositions by external action, in the accomplishment of the worship man owes to God, which has an inward and an outward side and is formulated in many and

manifold ways, according as the recognition of the divine Majesty is expressed in general or in particular. Such practical proofs of the reverence due to God, taken as a whole, are what we call the virtue of devotion, or the willing offering of all that appertains to divine worship, and, in particular, prayer, vows, tithes, solemn oaths, and especially sacrifice, which also, regarded in general, is a sign and external exercise of divine worship.

The offering of sacrifice is therefore an external act of the virtue of religion. Religion is the hallowed soil on which the sacrificial altar stands. Does not the fact that the idea of sacrifice is universally connected with, and indeed appertains to the worship of God, clearly intimate how important and sublime a thing sacrifice is? The value and dignity of a moral act depends upon the excellence of the virtue whence it proceeds, and on the significance and importance attaching to that virtue in the structure of Christian doctrine. The three theological virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity, are the loftiest and most exalted virtues, because God Himself is their author, their supreme object and exclusive motive. After them come the moral virtues which have for their object things external to God and which lead to God. Religion holds the highest place amongst these virtues, because its object, if not God personally and in Himself, is yet an external prerogative of God, the worship His creatures owe Him. This recognition and worship of God is the loftiest of the divine prerogatives, as it were the *crown-demesne* of the Deity, and consequently the out-

ward expressions of the virtue of religion surpass the exercise of the other moral virtues in value and excellence. Thus in offering sacrifice which appertains to the virtue of religion, we practise one of the noblest, most sublime virtues.

Another advantage that accrues to us from sacrifice as an outward act of religion, is that sacrifice essentially, and in a far greater degree than all other religious practices, is of an outward and overt character. This external aspect of acts of religion simply results from the natural relation of man to God, from the union of the material and immaterial in the nature of man, and from his social condition. In all these man is dependent upon God, and it is his bounden duty in each and every respect to show due recognition of God and pay external homage to Him. To think slightingly or to neglect this tribute of external service is to lower our idea of God and of our relation to God; it shows mental inconsequence and lack of moral earnestness. By outward practices of religion man gains strength, vitality, stability in his religious sentiments. These salutary effects are intensified and confirmed if the social circle in which man moves fulfils this natural obligation, and pays homage to God by public worship. This public and united service of God is then the support and safeguard, and naturally the surest guarantee of public regard for religion and morality. Without this external and social observance of religion the internal is a chimera, and its continuance an impossibility. Now we shall see that no religious practice is so adapted by its nature as is

the sacrificial *cultus* to express and convey not merely personal and private, but also common and public worship of God. Consequently we do not pay God the homage of outward service because He requires it; it is we, rather, who need it in order to satisfy our primary obligation towards God and to maintain and fortify ourselves in the practice of this duty.

The second truth and consideration whereby we may make the nature and the sublimity of sacrifice apparent to ourselves is, that of all religious practices and modes of worship sacrifice is the first and most excellent. We must, therefore, enter more closely into the subject, see what sacrifice is in itself, and how it is to be distinguished from all other external manifestations of devotion.

What then, be it asked, is sacrifice in the strictest sense of the word? It is the offering and partial change and transformation of a visible permanent object by the hands of a lawfully authorised priest, with the intention of expressing the universal sovereignty of God over man, and the entire subjection and self-surrender of man to God. In this definition there are three points which must be brought into prominence and more fully explained: first the oblation, secondly the act of sacrifice, and thirdly the significance of these two points. The first two constitute the external part, the third is the interior act or soul of the sacrifice.

The oblation, or the object that forms the matter of sacrifice and on which the sacrificial act is consummated, must be a permanent, self-subsistent,

visible, also an excellent and a precious one. We see this to be the case in all sacrifices. The oblation consists either of a living being, an animal or a product of the earth, an offering of fruit, of incense, or a libation. Thus sacrifices were divided into three classes: those of animals, of some species of food, and of incense. What is essential to the object is that it should be by nature a visible and a permanent oblation. In this respect the sacrificial object differs substantially from, and displays its superiority to all other devotional practices, many of which, such as prayer, are merely interior acts, or if they are of an exterior character, as genuflecting and bowing the head or total prostration of the body for the purpose of adoration, are yet merely transitory, not of a permanent nature. The object offered in sacrifice is, on the contrary, visible and permanent; and thereby sacrifice gains a character which emphatically and forcibly appeals to the senses.

Sacrifice is equally expressive and perceptible by the senses through the act or ceremony of sacrifice. It is essential to this, in the first place, that it should be an externally perceptible act performed on the oblation. Something must happen or be done to the latter, otherwise it would not be a sacrifice but merely a votive offering to God.[1] Secondly, the act of consecration must wholly and entirely withdraw the oblation from all human use or earthly purpose, and transfer so completely to God the possession of it, that it may become His personal and inalien-

[1] S. Thom., S. Theol. ii. 2, 9, 85, a 3, ad 3.

able property, so that it could not be employed in the service of any other without sacrilege. It is evident that this result cannot be attained unless a change, alteration, transformation takes place in the object offered in sacrifice, whether that change be an actually physical, or only a spiritual, moral or symbolical one. Thus we find the act of sacrifice varying according to the different objects; slaughter of the victim, its consumption by fire, sprinkling the altars or pouring blood or wine upon them, or no other ceremony than that of blessing and offering, as in the case of Melchizedek's sacrifice,[1] and the loaves of proposition,[2] which were already a sacrifice before the incense strewn on them was burnt. And by whichever of those ceremonial acts the oblation was consecrated, that act alone can be counted as a real act of sacrifice,[3] which was executed in the appointed and hallowed place, performed by the hand of the priest himself, and which truly surrendered the object offered in sacrifice to God as His own, such as solemn offering, consuming by fire, sprinkling and libations. The altar and the sacrificial flame that burnt on it were an image and an instrument of the Deity, who accepted the oblation and appropriated it to Himself. All else, such as the slaughter

[1] Gen. xiv. 18.

[2] Lev. xxi. 6, 8.

[3] Suarez, De Euch. chap. 73, sect. 5, n 5, 6: "Ac denique haec commutatio, quatenus in Dei cultum et honorem fit, est ipsamet oblatio sacrificativa, quia per eam res oblata humanis usibus inepta redditur et Deo dicatur et in illius cultum transfertur."

of the victim and many other acts, were solely a preparation for the act of sacrifice.

Now what is the meaning of the oblation and the act of sacrifice? The oblation signifies no other than the individual who offers the sacrifice or causes it to be offered, he himself, with all that he has and all that he is, consequently not merely his outward possessions, but also his person, his being, his life. It is the individual himself, who, represented by this oblation, offers himself. All that takes place in regard to this oblation, ought to be enacted on him. This representation of the individual himself in and by the oblation, is the reason why the oblation, in order to be symbolical of man, must be a visible, permanent, self-subsistent, worthy object, because man is a visible and independent personage and the noblest, most exalted being in the visible creation. On this account also the offering is taken from the man's possessions, and from the produce of his labour and his industry; on this account, finally, in almost all sacrifices we find this significant ceremony, that the one who presents the oblation lays his hand upon it, in order, as it were, to transfer his being and his obligations in a perceptible manner to the sacrificial object, to consecrate it as his representative before God, and make himself one with it in a spiritual union. By this the great law of substitution is expressed and put into practice, a law which is of such momentous and far-reaching importance not only in the order of nature, but even in the supernatural order of grace. Original sin and the redemption of mankind rest on this law;

nay, its operation extends, as we see in the holy sacrifice and the sacraments, even to irrational creatures, since they form a moral whole with man, and man with Christ.[1] The significance of the act of sacrifice is as follows. As was already indicated in the definition given of the word sacrifice, it is man's intention by means of sacrifice to recognise and give expression to the relationship in which he stands to God as his first beginning in every respect; on the one hand, therefore, the boundless sublimity and majesty of God, who is in Himself the Supreme Good, and the primary source of all that is good in creatures, and on the other hand, to express man's recognition of God, his complete subjection to, dependence on and surrender of himself to God, in consequence of his creation, preservation, activity, and future happiness. The offering of sacrifice is in itself a solemn declaration that man has received from God all that he has and all that he is, and that he is prepared in His service to give up everything, even his life, if God should claim its return, or to spend it entirely in His service. Whoso offers a sacrifice speaks, it may be said, thus to God: "I confess that Thou art the Supreme Good, the essence and author of all that is good, and that of Thy pure bounty Thou hast given me all, my being and my life, and that all belongs to Thee, and that as Thou hast given, so Thou canst take back all I have. Wherefore take my life and destroy it, if so Thou willest, not only because of my sins and transgressions, but because Thou art

[1] Gen. xxii. 13; Lev. xvii. 11.

absolute Lord and Monarch of all things. I acknowledge that I am not only ready to surrender my life, if it is Thy will to take it, but that, apart from this, it is my duty and my desire to dedicate my whole life to Thy service, not merely to die, but also to live solely for Thee. There ought to be no moment of my life in which I do not think of Thee and love Thee, no fibre in my whole being that is not employed in Thy service. But as this is not possible in this mortal life, do Thou at least accept this sacrifice in my stead, as a solemn declaration that it is my duty and my will to belong entirely to Thee and to live for Thee, as I present this oblation and consecrate it as Thy personal and inalienable property. May this vicarious sacrifice, and this my solemn acknowledgment and declaration be acceptable in Thy sight, until I myself attain to that happy state when I shall be a living and continual sacrifice to Thy divine Majesty in an eternity of bliss."

Such is the grand and glorious import of sacrifice. Thus man thinks and speaks when he offers sacrifice. It is the most sublime and comprehensive recognition of the supreme dominion of God, the symbolical expression of the most complete, most profound and universal surrender to God, who is the first beginning and ultimate end of all things; it is the practical proof of the serious moral endeavour to mould our being and our life as a living and continual tribute, whereby the sanctity and glory of God is reflected. The whole relationship, the entire subordination and proper position

of man to God is expressed and symbolised by sacrifice. God is the author and the end, the Lord of life and of death, nay, even more of life than of death. Man ought to be ready to offer up his life for God, but still more to promote His glory by living for God. We do not intend by this to deny that the destruction of life is highly important and most justifiable, because a necessary acknowledgment of the divine overlordship. Since man receives life from God, he must also be prepared, as God's creature, to give his life for God. Another reason for this was added when sin came into the world, for by sin man has forfeited his life. Thence we find that principally amongst the sacrifices of antiquity destruction holds the foremost place, for the purpose of maintaining and intensifying the consciousness of sin, and at the same time of indicating that it is not because God has need of our gifts that we offer them to Him. This does not, however, exclude the other positive meaning of sacrifice, that of living for God and devoting one's life to His service. Also this meaning belongs essentially to the relation in which man stands to God, as a creature to his author and benefactor, nay, it has a yet more important, perfect and sublime meaning. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. He is not the author of death; death entered into this world by sin. In God's primary design death and destruction had no place, but only life for God and in God. By such a life God is actually more glorified than by death. Even in holocausts which involve the entire destruction of

the victim, the slaughter of the sacrificial victim does not constitute the act of sacrifice, it is merely the preparation for it; and even when the act of sacrifice consists in the destruction of the oblation, it does, according to its meaning, denote merely the renunciation of possession, and the resignation and surrender of life, but rather a change, a transfiguration and transformation into a better, more perfect state, forgetting and relinquishing self in the service of God and the closest union with Him. This sublime meaning is symbolised by the perfume of the oblation and the cloud of incense rising up to mingle in the divine fragrance—the ascent of the creature and its absorption in God, its goal and final end. Therefore in heaven there will be no representative sacrifice, for we shall all be ourselves a living sacrifice to the divine Majesty, and therein will our beatitude consist. This is also the reason why holy Mass, our sacrifice and the most perfect of all sacrifices, of its very nature accentuates and gives prominence to both meanings of sacrifice, death for God and life for and in God, the latter indeed far more than the former. Sacrifice is consequently a religious symbol whereby the consecration and surrender of life is typified, and, indeed, the surrender of life in its fullest sense, in the sense of the use and disposal of life. We can also spend our life and be spent in the service of man, but not in the sense of unconditional, all-embracing, engrossing of being and life, as is involved in sacrifice and in it finds expression towards God. In this sense God alone is Lord of life and of death; and it

is the acknowledgment of this divine prerogative of sole sovereignty by means of the symbol of the oblation and act of sacrifice that renders sacrifice so sublime a thing.

From what has been said, we now understand why sacrifice is the highest and most sublime act of religion, and this for two reasons. The first reason is because by no other religious exercise is the relation of man to God embodied and expressed so correctly and comprehensively. Prayer, which is also an outward act of religion, can also in a certain degree comprise and express the relation of man to God, as adoration, thanksgiving, petition and propitiation, but not in a lasting and permanent manner, as sacrifice does in the oblation, which is the representative of man. Besides worship is intrinsically the first, most natural and appropriate act of religion; now sacrifice is always essentially and in itself an act of worship of the divine Majesty. Votive offerings and tithes, that are another act of religion, are merely an acknowledgment of the divine right of proprietorship over a man's external possessions and not over the man himself; the oblation is, moreover, offered not immediately to God, but for the benefit of the clergy, of the temple, or to defray the expenses of divine service. An oath is only the recognition of God as the highest truth, as the author, the defender of all truth and the chastiser of untruth, and therefore it is only a partial glorification of God. By vows, finally, we offer to God only a part of what we possess, or of ourselves and our manner of life. Only in sacri-

fice does the entire relationship of man to God and of God to man attain full and complete expression and practical proof.

The second reason why sacrifice is the highest act of divine worship is found in the external circumstances under which sacrifice is generally offered. In order to accomplish the sacrifice, the individual must, at least comformably to the dispositions and regulations which God alone has the right to make and which He has made from the remotest times, leave the obscurity of private life and appear in public. Sacrifice is always a public, a great and solemn, a common act. For the offering of sacrifices public places, duly consecrated, temples and altars are set apart, and suitable ordinances and the office of a consecrated Priesthood are instituted; the act of sacrifice itself is accomplished by the use of sacred and imposing ceremonies, to which wealth and art are called upon to contribute all they can offer of grandeur and magnificence. And justly so; sacrifice is the great State-function in which God and man, the monarchs of the natural and supernatural world, meet together to adjust their mutual relations. Hence the momentous and sublime character of the act requires that man, for God's sake and his own, should strain every nerve to give to the meeting an aspect of dignity and splendour. Thus sacrifice always calls upon the whole of creation to join with man, its visible head, to pay homage to Him who is the common Author and Lord of all. In offering sacrifice man presents to God all that it is in his power to offer, and God is

glorified in proportion to the plenitude and extent of its greatness and glory. In fact, by nothing on earth does God so completely attain His end in creation as He does when sacrifice is offered to Him. Sacrifice is truly the fairest blossom, the crown of divine worship. And hence it follows that we call by the name of sacrifice, taken in the widest sense of the word, all interior and exterior practices in accomplishing which we are actuated by reverence for the divine Majesty, because sacrifice is the most important and sublime manifestation of the virtue of religion.

In the second place, we can clearly understand why God retains sacrifice as His prerogative, and why it cannot be offered to any but God alone. There is, in fact, but one God and Creator and ultimate end of all things, and sacrifice exactly expresses this relation of man and of the creation to God. Sacrifice is always and essentially an act of worship, and therefore it is called "worship" in Holy Scripture.[1] As man speaks to God by sacrifice he may not speak to any other but Him. Hence sacrifice is the inalienable and sovereign prerogative of God. As God is not as much honoured by anything as by sacrifice, so by nothing is He so dishonoured as by the offering of sacrifice to any being beside God. This is the most horrible sacrilege and complete apostasy from God. "He that sacrificeth to gods shall be put to death, save only to the Lord."[2] "Sacrifice is a divine matter,"

[1] Gen. xxii. 5.
[2] Exod. xxii. 20.

says St Augustine,[1] "and no one believes it to be incumbent on him to honour any one by offering sacrifice unless it be one whom he knows to be God, holds to be God, or of whom he makes a God."[2] We see from this, to mention it at once, why evil spirits, the rivals and mimics of God, as Tertullian calls them, are so keen upon the honour of the altar and the sacrifice. "The demons," says St Augustine, "do not rejoice as much at inhaling the fragrance as at receiving the divine honours[3] of the sacrifice." And again: "Satan would not have demanded sacrifice if he had not known that it was only to be offered to the true God. Men have in their pride arrogated to themselves manifestations of honour and veneration shown to God, but it is almost an unheard-of thing that royal personages should cause sacrifices to be offered to them. To claim that right would be tantamount to setting oneself up as a divinity."[4] Thus throughout the history of mankind we meet with unheard-of efforts made by fallen spirits to raise altars to themselves where the altars of the Most High have been overthrown, and to claim for themselves the honours of sacrifice. We do, indeed, see what terrible results their audacity has achieved. In ancient times there was but one single altar of the one true God in the whole world, and how often they succeeded in gaining forcible possession of that one. And even

[1] Civ. Dei, i. 10, c. 6.
[2] *Ibid.* c. 4.
[3] *Ibid.* c. xix. 6.
[4] Contra advers. leg. et proph. i. 1, c. 18.

now a large proportion of mankind offer sacrifice to and prostrate themselves in worship before hideous images of devils. On the other hand, however, it is now evident to us why our holy Church, zealous as she is for the maintenance of religion and for the glory of God, attaches such great value and extreme importance to the holy sacrifice that she only enjoins attendance at Mass on Sunday as the sole essential and strictly obligatory divine service. For her nothing exceeds the dignity, the potency, the sanctifying effect of the holy sacrifice. The Church sees in it the most efficacious means of upholding religion and sanctifying the people, the most perfect way of establishing a covenant between God and mankind. There is nothing whereby God asserts His sovereignty over the world emphatically and so effectually as by the sacrifice.

In the third place, we also learn from what has been said above concerning the nature of sacrifice, the reason why man has at all times striven with persistent zeal to pay homage to God by offering sacrifice, and also why all forms of belief which make any pretension to be of the nature of a religion, desire their worship of the Deity to be mainly manifested by a visible sacrifice. Sacrifice is the most sublime and central act of religious service, and the one most in keeping with human nature. The Council of Trent declares that the nature of man requires a visible sacrifice.[1] Mankind in general, and more especially founders of religion, believed that only then had they fully

[1] Sess. xxii. c. 1.

acquitted themselves of their duty towards God and the regard due to human nature when they made visible sacrifice a part of their religious ritual. On what a grand scale in reality does this feeling natural to mankind, that God must be honoured by sacrifice, show itself in the world and in history. Let us only pass in review the innumerable altars and places of sacrifice erected by man, from the Persian temples of the sun, the wondrously magnificent pagodas of India, the heavy, massive sanctuaries of Osiris, Belus and Astarte, and the ever-cheerful, green-garlanded temples of beauteous Hellas and Hesperia, down to the stone cromlechs of the Celtic Druids, the sacrificial stones of the Aztecs, and the gruesome fetishes of the African bread-fruit tree; furthermore, the incalculable amount of matter for sacrifice brought together in rich abundance from every kingdom of Nature, and the interminable ranks of priests who officiated and worshippers who assisted at the sacrifice out of all nations from all climes and in all times—does it not seem as if the whole human race were banded together to give an overwhelming testimony to the truth that all creation ought to be offered to the infinite God in one collective sacrifice? Does not the yearning of human nature to lay at the feet of the Lord of heaven and earth the recognition and worship of humanity in a never-ending sacrificial service, lie at the root of this world-wide offering of sacrifice, despite its manifold errors and deformities? The clouds of incense rising up to heaven from the altar of sacrifice are the royal

road whereby divine worship mounts up heavenwards, and blessing, grace and reconciliation descends to earth from the bosom of the Godhead. And when unnatural outbursts of impiety succeeded, as was the case in almost all ages, in overthrowing the altar and dispersing the priests and the worshippers, no sooner was the deluge of hatred to God abated than mankind returned to its habitual custom, put together again the scattered stones of the sacrificial altar and once more confessed the name of the Lord by sacrifice. Of what splendid deeds of heroic piety has not this religious impulse of his nature rendered man capable! What fortitude, what courage in the presence of death the Jews showed during the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans! While the wall that enclosed Mount Sion quaked and tottered under the impetus of the brass battering-rams, and firebrands, arrows and projectiles flew over and around the Holy of Holies, and cruel hunger gnawed the vitals of the besieged, they still with unwavering fidelity and persistency performed the prescribed sacrificial rites, and not until the daily sacrifice must cease through default of victims did despair seize upon them. This was for them a certain sign that God had forsaken them and their end had come. What glorious instances of courage in offering sacrifice we find among the early Christians! Only at the risk of their lives could they enjoy the consolation of assisting at holy Mass in the catacombs. How many amongst them, Priests, Popes, and the faithful, were surprised by their persecutors during the celebration of the

divine mysteries and slain at the foot of the altar. Similar examples are not wanting in the records of the persecutions of the Christians in Japan, China, and England, down to the Reign of Terror at the time of the French Revolution. To worship God by offering sacrifice is one of the traditions of the human race. In regard to this all ages, all nations tell the same tale, and scarce any other religious conviction has inscribed itself with proofs of so grand a character on the pages of the annals of men and nations. There must, therefore, undoubtedly be something of vast import, something great, sublime and divine about sacrifice.

2

We can now draw some conclusions from the aforegoing examination of the subject and apply them to holy Mass. We know full well that the Mass is a veritable sacrifice, the sacrifice of the New Covenant, and our sacrifice. If this be so, what do we gather for ourselves from what has been said? How ought we to regard holy Mass, and how ought we to assist at it?

Before all else, from what has been said of sacrifice in general, it follows that we ought to have the greatest esteem and reverence for holy Mass. We must and will have religion and give practical proof of it. This outward manifestation of religion must be a reasonable and enlightened one on our part. We must also decide which of the various religious exercises is of the greatest consequence, because

among the several external acts of divine worship all are not equally important and significant. Now it is beyond a doubt that nothing comes up to the sublimity and importance of the sacrifice of the Mass. The holy sacrifice is the most exalted, sublime and super-excellent visible act of divine worship. As Sunday is superior to the other days of the week, so holy Mass is superior to all other religious exercises. We ought, therefore, to esteem it the greatest privilege to hear Mass, and prefer it to any other religious service, even were it not enjoined upon us as a strict duty. If we would render real honour and glory to God, let us assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass. There is such sublimity about the Mass to the mind of every intelligent and earnest Christian, that something seems to be wanting to his daily round of religious acts if he has not heard Mass.

A second conclusion which may be drawn from what has been said, is that it ought to be a real delight to us to be present at the celebration of Mass. The reason of this is because holy Mass has this inestimable advantage for us, that of satisfying all our many and great obligations towards God. Every sensible and noble heart knows and is ready to acknowledge how much he owes to the goodness and loving-kindness of God. In fact, all day long our hand is held out to receive benefits from God, and truly daily and hourly we receive innumerable and immeasurable blessings from our great and good God; nay, our whole being, our existence and activity is a great benefit, a free gift God in His

bounty bestows on us. Is it not, therefore, just that we should at least once in the day make some return to God? Unhappily too often the consciousness of manifold faults and shortcomings in the service of God is associated with this feeling, consequently the obligation of making atonement and satisfaction is added to the duty of adoration and thanksgiving. Now for all this we have holy Mass. By it we give honour to God, as it is meet that He should be honoured and can be honoured by us; we pay the debt of gratitude and satisfaction. With one act we fulfil all our obligations, God is placated, for the moment He cannot require more from us than we render to Him. How precious and dear to our heart, therefore, must the hour be when this sacrifice is offered! Our soul might well be filled with exultant joy when the opportunity is afforded us of hearing Mass, and well might we exclaim with the royal Psalmist, "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me; we shall go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. cxxi. 1); "I will pay my vows to the Lord before all his people" (Ps. cxv. 14). By means of holy Mass we are actually in a position to render true honour to God, to cause Him gladness, and glorify Him as He deserves to be glorified.

In the third place, we learn with what solemnity, with what earnest attention and fervent devotion we ought to take part in the holy sacrifice. Even if we were merely present as spectators the deep significance and sublimity of the sacrifice, reverence for the divine Majesty and our own self-respect

would induce us to follow the sacred function with the attention and seriousness which every important transaction demands of us. We do not, however, assist at the holy sacrifice merely as spectators, but as fellow-offerers, for we join with the priest in offering it; the priest is our official representative, we are morally one with him, and the sacrifice he offers is ours. How ill inattention and distraction become a priest at the altar. But we are even more than spectators, more than priests, we are ourselves the sacrificial victim. Whom then does the oblation represent that lies upon the altar? Whom but ourselves—our person, our life, our all? We ought by rights to be laid on the altar, and whatever takes place in the oblation ought to be accomplished in us. With what intense interest and anxiety we should follow judicial proceedings which were to decide respecting the disposition of a considerable portion of our property, the credit of our good name. In the Mass all we have and are is concerned. We leave the altar in the character of persons consecrated and offered to God. To realise in ourselves the intention of the morning sacrifice ought really to be the serious occupation of the day and of our whole life. That is the grand, the glorious, the divine intention of the sacrifice, not merely to die for God but to live for God, to be a living sacrifice to the divine Majesty, and to fashion one's whole life as an acceptable offering to God. Thus in the holy sacrifice of the Mass we have nothing short of a complete and perfect pattern and model whereby to regulate our life.

From what has been said it now follows that we ought to strive to hear Mass with true devotion and piety. Sacrifice is by its nature only an outward sign of the inward intention of the will to offer God the worship due to Him. It is the immediate product of virtue and the expression of the virtue of devotion (*devotio*). Without this interior intention and disposition the sacrifice, despite all its splendour and sublimity, would be worthless before God, a body without a soul. Of what does God complain more bitterly in the Old Testament than of this formal, merely external offering of sacrifice destitute of any inward devotion.[1] On the other hand, by participating with heart and mind in the sacrifice of the Mass, and entering into the spirit of the sacrifice, we fulfil to the full extent the virtue of devotion, which consists in entire recollection in all that relates to divine worship, and we gain at the same time heavenly graces to enable us to manifest outwardly this inward attitude of mind in accordance with the spirit of the sacrifice in a practical manner in our life. The sacrifice and the meaning of that sacrifice may in truth be said to be the most beautiful and sublime guide to the Christian life.

From the thoughts on which we have been enlarging we can finally learn the way and manner of assisting at holy Mass. Until the consecration the Mass is only a remote and a proximate preparation for the real act of sacrifice, which is consummated when the words of consecration are uttered. This preparation does not merely relate to the

[1] Isa. xxix. 13; Matt. xv. 8.

disposing of the oblation but also to ourselves, in order that we may be present at the celebration of the holy sacrifice with fitting recollection and devotion. In this view there is nothing simpler or more suitable than to call to mind the thoughts which have just been unfolded and impress them on the memory; namely, how necessary and all-important the practice of divine worship is for us; how much we owe to God—recognition, adoration, praise, thanksgiving, supplication and satisfaction; and how we can acquit ourselves of all these obligations towards God by the sacrifice of the Mass; how the Mass is admirably adapted to render the most exalted honour to God by the oblation and the ceremonial of sacrifice, and what all this signifies for us. This consideration, transformed by hearty acts of the will into the form of prayer, are, in fact, the best method of prayer during Mass. We can also observe how the thoughts that have been suggested find expression in the customary prayers of the Mass presented by the Church—heartfelt compunction in the prayers said at the foot of the altar, the various objects for which the sacrifice is offered indicated in the Gloria, the Offertory prayers, and in the actual Canon of the Mass. How replete with profound meaning are the words: "We praise thee, we bless thee, we adore thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks for thy great glory" (from the Gloria). . . . "Accept, O holy Father, almighty, eternal God, this immaculate Host which I offer unto thee, the living and true God." . . . "We offer unto thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation, beseeching thy cle-

mency that, in the sight of thy divine Majesty, it may ascend with the odour of sweetness for our salvation and that of the whole world" (while preparing the oblation, or at the offertory). . . . "We humbly pray and beseech thee that thou wouldest accept and bless these holy and unspotted gifts . . . this sacrifice of praise for the redemption of souls, for the hope of their safety and salvation who pay their vows to thee, the eternal, living and true God. . . . Graciously accept this oblation of our service. . . . Most excellent Majesty, vouchsafe to look with a propitious and serene countenance upon these gifts . . . and command them to be carried by the hands of thy holy angel to thy altar on high in the sight of thy divine Majesty. . . . Through Christ our Lord, through him and with him and in him, is to thee all honour and glory" (Canon). From this we perceive what a depth and wealth of meaning is contained in the several prayers prescribed by the Church.

If, in conclusion, we endeavour to realise all this, how many motives we have to value the holy sacrifice of the Mass, even only inasmuch as it is a sacrifice, to love it and do our utmost to assist at it. It is truly so natural a service, one so thoroughly in accord with human nature. All the powers and faculties of man are therein employed in the service of God, it is the chief and central, the most perfect and sublime method of prayer and divine worship. Moreover, sacrifice is a service of exalted dignity, because it is the oldest and the one in most widespread use. All

nations in all ages have given their faith and reverence for God expression in sacrifice. It may almost be said that the history of sacrifice is also the history of mankind. Does not this fact in itself contain a grave condemnation of every religion which asserts itself to be able to dispense with visible sacrifice? Finally, sacrifice is a true and perfect method of divine worship, because it honours God truly, as He can be honoured and must be honoured. The sacrificial altar is the true throne of God's honour and the visible foundation of His supremacy in this world. How greatly we ought to value and venerate it on that account! He who is zealous for the honour of God, must also be zealous for the honour of the altar of God; and this all the more since, unhappily, we see how great is the injury done to the glory of God through the indifference and indolence of many who call themselves Catholics, through the devastating influence of Protestantism, which acknowledges no need of a visible sacrifice, and, lastly, through the horrors of the paganism which prevails over half the globe. So, too, in many districts of our own country the altar of the Most High has disappeared from the spot where it once stood; it is no longer seen in the time-honoured cathedrals and ancient churches, but is too often relegated to mean and unworthy surroundings. Does not this fact convey a serious admonition to the heart of every Catholic, bidding him make all the reparation within his power for the default of the honour due to God, by frequent and devout attendance at

holy Mass, and do his utmost to take the mastery from the evil spirit to whom, it appears, strength against the continual sacrifice is again given.[1]

[1] Dan. viii. 12.

II

ON THE BEAUTY OF THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE

THE ecclesiastical year, with its cycle of festivals and mysteries, beginning with the birth of our Lord, springs up heavenwards like a glorious, sparkling fountain, rising ever higher and higher until it attains its climax in the Ascension, and in the Feast of the most holy Trinity reaches the invisible source and the highest wellspring of all Christian mysteries. From thence the brilliant jet again tends downwards; in the Festival of Pentecost it descends once more upon the earth in copious streams of grace, and in the most holy Feast of Corpus Christi finds repose and flows onward beside the still waters of our earthly existence.

The Festival of Corpus Christi might justly be called the Christian Feast of Tabernacles. It is indeed an enthusiastic outburst of thankfulness for God's gracious dwelling amongst His people, for His presence with them through the vast desert, for the manna that fell from heaven, the miraculous streams that issued from the rock, and the protection of Heaven afforded them on many and various occasions. Much more reason is there to celebrate

this Feast of thanksgiving now than of old, in the full acceptance, reality and sublimity of the word. The adorable Sacrament of the Altar is, in fact, so essentially the grand, sacred treasure of the Church, her life, her soul, and the sum and substance of her collective devotion. The holy Eucharist does not merely consist in the continual dwelling of God with us, it is not merely a sacrament but also a sacrifice, the one, only, most precious sacrifice of our religion, and as such the golden circle wherein heaven and earth are brought into contact and are joined together. Let us now single out from among the superabundant treasures of this sacrament the Eucharistic sacrifice, and dwell on it awhile, in order to delight ourselves in its beauty and grandeur.

The glory of the Eucharistic sacrifice is a twofold one, an interior and exterior one. The interior consists more of spiritual beauty and sublimity, while the exterior, displaying itself in a form perceptible to the senses, is revealed in truly human beauty. We will consider both the one and the other.

I

The interior beauty of our sacrifice is a whole world in itself, a world much more vast, magnificent and wonderful than all the rest of creation put together; it is, however, visible only to the spiritual eye and under the guidance of revelation. The most holy sacrament may more than any other

mystery be termed *mysterium fidei*, the mystery of faith. Now the Church, supported by the authority of Holy Scripture, sums up briefly, concisely, exhaustively, this belief, that Christ, for the purpose of the sacrifice, is really, truly and actually present under the appearances of bread and wine. Here we have, therefore, the true and personal presence of the God-man. Now where the God-man is present in person, He there unfolds before us His whole life and action in their historical order, as He accomplished the work of redemption. The whole work of redemption was effected in three principal mysteries: that of the Incarnation, of the Death on the cross, and of the Resurrection and glorification. And these three mysteries, placed in their mutual relationship and united in one brilliant group, constitute the interior spiritual beauty and splendour of the Eucharistic sacrifice. Let us briefly touch upon these points.

In the Eucharistic sacrifice the incarnation is mystically renewed. The incarnation was, as it were, the "beautiful gate" through which the God-man entered into this world of ours and assumed our nature; so also the sacrificial act of the consecration is for the eucharistic Christ the gate of entrance into and the commencement of His sacramental life. As in the incarnation the human nature of our Lord was created, and without the assumption of a human personality, was substantially united with the second Person of the Godhead, by this alliance forming one Person, so also here the God-man Christ, if not created anew,

yet is called forth and caused to be present, and the bread and wine, their substance being eliminated, are united by means of their accidents to the eucharistic Christ. And just as in the incarnation the human nature participated in the honour due to the Godhead, so here also between the sacramental species and Christ, who is concealed under them, there ensues a community, not indeed of nature and life, but a certain community of veneration. Christ is present, and therefore homage is paid Him as much as if He were visible in person, but it is paid to the Christ there present *as* He is present, with and under the sacramental veils. If, therefore, the incarnation is nothing but the introduction of God into the realm of created beings and the admission of it to a share in the Godhead, we see what an extension of the incarnation takes place in the sacrifice of the Mass, how new and mighty is the hold the God-man takes in the realm of created beings, and how He puts Himself in touch with a wider and extended circle, that of inanimate creation, bringing it into a union with Himself hitherto unheard of. The Christian altar is ofttimes compared to the most pure womb of the Mother of God. And justly so; the presence of Christ here, as it was there, is the fruit of virginity and the operation of the Holy Ghost; here, as there, silence and mystery prevail, and white and shining veils shroud His divinity from mortal eyes. These two mysteries appertain to one another, elucidate one another, amplify one another in their great and far-reaching aims. One difference exists between them: the

most pure womb of Mary gave the Saviour His mortal life, whereas on the altar, as in His glorious grave, He is born to an immortal and glorified life.

The Eucharistic sacrifice is, in fact, also a renewal of the mystery of our Lord's resurrection and glorification. The purposes and object of the Eucharist required the presence of our Lord's body after a quite exceptional and miraculous manner, and this the act of consecration effects. Hence the Eucharist is called above all others the "wondrous sacrament," because for its institution, formation and maintenance a whole series of miracles was needed; miraculous power in poor, weak man, to whom it is given to call God into a new form of existence, and that by five gently whispered words; a miracle wrought on the bread and wine, whose substance is done away with, as it were by an act of annihilation, and whose accidents retain their consistency and efficacy under a totally altered mode of subsistence; finally, a miracle wrought on the body of Christ itself, which without ceasing to be a true body and material substance, yet assumes spiritual properties, and after the manner of a simple substance or of a spirit, begins to exist, like our soul in our body, whole and entire in the whole, and whole and entire in every particle; nay, more, to be present at one and the same time here and in heaven and in innumerable places on the face of this earth, which it is impossible even for a spirit to do of itself. Is not that an interior, mystic grandeur, enough to bewilder mind and senses? Is not the most holy sacrament a perpetual exposition, a

wreath, it might be said, a brilliant and glorious series of the greatest, most unprecedented miracles, the sum and essence of all miracles, effected in the most unostentatious manner, and by the exercise of the humblest powers? In very truth, He is here a hidden God; deeper and ever deeper does He descend into the abyss of abjectness and nothingness of the world He created; ever more and more closely does the Bridegroom draw together the curtains of His lowly tabernacle, and yet what a flood of divine glory breaks through the veil that shrouds the sacred Host! Far more glorious is He here than as the author of the visible creation, when "He set His tabernacle in the sun, and rejoiced as a giant to run the way to the highest heaven";[1] far more wonderful is He here than when journeying through the fair land of Palestine, when words of grace and of life fell from His lips, His hand distributed divine gifts of bounty and mercy, and miracles accompanied His steps as He passed over lake and meadow, numerous and multiform as flowers opening under the genial rays of the sun in spring. One might indeed almost say that He is more glorious here even than in heaven, where He is enthroned as Lord of hosts, and wields a mighty sceptre over worlds of unseen beauty; there He reigns only as the Son of Man, once visible in His sacred humanity; here He arrays Himself in the gorgeous garment of pure miracles, and by the sacramental multiplication of Himself assumes the regal robe of a kind of divine omni-

[1] Ps. xviii. 4.

presence and immensity. How wondrous is the manner in which our Lord is present in the sacrament of the altar! The sacrifice affords the occasion, and in the sacrifice He perpetually accomplishes anew the work of redemption, while, as at the same time both priest and victim, He consummates the Eucharistic sacrifice.

The sublimity and sanctity of the priest is doubtless of great import for the sacrifice itself. Now we have a High Priest who is ordained by God Himself,[1] "holy, undefiled, made higher than the heavens," [2] the God-man Himself. This High Priest "continueth for ever," and therefore, according to St Paul,[3] "hath an everlasting priesthood," in contrast to the priesthood of the Old Covenant; He has no successor in His office or real substitute; priests are only His visible ministers, what they do is done by His power, and they merely screen from sight His majesty and His miracles. So true is this, that in the essential act of sacrifice the persons are entirely changed. The visible priest no longer acts and speaks in his own name and in the name of the Church, but he speaks in the name of Christ and makes use of Christ's own words. Nor could it be otherwise. Our sacrifice is of such great sublimity, and such power is required for its celebration, that nothing short of the sanctity and power of the God-man is adequate for its accomplishment. Thus Christ co-operates in the holy sacrifice every time it is offered, not merely in as far as He instituted the sacrifice and imparts to it its virtue, but inas-

[1] Heb. v. 6. [2] Heb. vii. 26. [3] Heb. vii. 20 *seq.*

much as while He permits the priest to act as His visible representative, He Himself at every celebration of the Mass, in His character of High Priest, really takes part in the action of His representative and disposes it for the honour and glory of God. Thus Christ as the High Priest acts the greatest, most important part in every Eucharistic sacrifice, and, viewed from this standpoint, every low Mass celebrated in a humble village church is a splendid pontifical function, surpassing all the glory of the Old Covenant. The sacrifices of the patriarchs, the sacrifices of the tabernacle and of the golden temple, in all their magnificence, owed their glory and greatness to the fact that they were types and shadows of our sacrifice and our High Priest, whom they were privileged to prefigure and foretell.

But Christ is not only present, He not only acts in the Mass in his character of High Priest. He is also present there as a sacrifice, in fact, with all the sacrifices which He has offered. The God-man carried His self-sacrificing love to an excess, in that He offered not one only, but, one might say, two great sacrifices; the sacrifice of the Cross, and the sacrifice of the Last Supper. Now this is the chief beauty and glory of the Eucharistic sacrifice, that it is the renewal of the sacrifice of the Last Supper, and in it, as in that, the sacrifice of the Cross is re-enacted. The sacrifice in the cenacle was the first Mass, infinitely venerable and sacred, because Christ in person celebrated it, instituted it, and conferred on the Apostles power and authority to celebrate it in perpetuity. It was actually one with

the sacrifice of the Cross. When in the cenacle the Saviour took bread and wine for the purpose of changing them into His body and His blood, and thereby accomplishing the Eucharistic sacrifice, He anticipated in spirit the bloody sacrifice which He was to consummate on the Cross in a few hours' time, and thus in thought and in will positively and substantially united the two sacrifices outwardly and inwardly in one great and perfected sacrifice. In fact, the sacrifice of the Mass is by the words of consecration and by the separation of the Lord's body and blood under the sacred species, essentially a renewal and representation of the sacrifice of the Cross, also a real repetition, continuation and completion of it. The only difference is that the sacrifice is in the one case a bloody, in the other an unbloody one; all else is the same—the Priest, the Victim, the intention of the sacrifice, the merit of the sacrifice; yes, pre-eminently the merit of the sacrifice. No new satisfaction is made, no fresh merits are gained by the Eucharistic sacrifice, the redeeming merit of the sacrifice of the Cross is what solely and wholly gives it value and efficacy and by it is communicated to the faithful. The sacrifice of the Mass carries out and completes the sacrifice of the Cross; the former dispenses the merit gained by the latter, and thus the two constitute one great and perfect sacrifice.

Thus we have in a mystic and wondrous manner, and in all truth and reality, the whole sacrificial action and glory of the God-man united

in our sacrifice. By this we can form an estimate of the magnitude of its efficacy. In fact, three mighty streams proceed from our altar, rich in grace, rejoicing heaven and earth by their glory. The principal stream flows heavenwards, breaking in mighty, far-echoing waves and radiant undulations before the throne of the divine Majesty, who inhabits the light inaccessible, and thence separates into a hundred branches to make glad the city of God and its happy denizens. It is certain that by Christ's inherent glory, His self-chosen state of abasement and His mystic death, as well as by the marvellous multiplication of the Eucharistic sacrifice in all time and every place, God is glorified in a special and unprecedented manner. Everywhere on this earth, at every moment of time, the divine eye beholds a Christian altar whereon the august sacrifice is offered to Him, filling the earth with the fragrance of incense, which rises up to heaven as an oblation of thanksgiving. Our little globe is the favoured spot whence the purest gold and the costliest incense of glorification and adoration is sent up to heaven. The second stream flows over our earth, surrounds with blessings our fields, our houses, our towns, brings solace and help to all the trials of life, imparts a more cheerful aspect to our temporal circumstances; removes the soil from the barren ground of earthly endeavours and plants it with flowers and fruit of merit for heaven; it offers staunch resistance to the rising flame of passion and sin, and buries countless sins and transgressions in the

still, the purifying waters of redemption. What indeed would our earth be without this holy sacrifice? Could it possibly still exist, or would not an angry deluge have ere this swept it away? But above it stands the clear, beauteous bow of this sacrifice, and God cannot look upon our earth without blessing it. The blessing of this altar rests upon heaven and earth, vivifying, sanctifying, fortifying everything. The third stream penetrates, as it were, the interior of the earth and falls like rays of soft moonlight on that realm of shadows, where multitudes of holy souls mourn because they are not yet fully purified, and yearn to be admitted to the beatific vision of God. For these holy souls the Eucharistic sacrifice is the messenger of mercy who brings their ransom and conducts them to the dwelling of God, to their heavenly home. Does aught afford such hope, such help to the nether world of purgatory as the holy sacrifice of the Mass? A fourth stream rises beside the altar itself and surrounds it with a resplendent halo of glory. On that first Good Friday, long ages ago, when at noon time an awful darkness shrouded Golgotha, the place of skulls, few indeed were those who could recognise and adore the God who, hanging on the cross, consummated the great sacrifice whereby the world was redeemed; He died as a condemned criminal, His blood flowed down upon the rock and was trodden under foot by sinners, He Himself found an inglorious sepulchre at the foot of the rock. Now He who was executed has erected an altar to Himself upon

the mount, and draws all men to Him. Hidden under the most lowly appearances, not even to be recognised as man, He demands for Himself the homage of faith, of adoration, of love. And these He meets with. They are paid Him from age to age, from generation to generation, everywhere under the wide vault of heaven. All other thrones and altars have tottered and been overthrown; this altar stands firm and will never be shaken, and the sacrifice offered upon it is the solemn, never-ending vindication of honour after the ignominy of the sacrifice of the Cross on Calvary.

Thus some insight is afforded into the interior beauty, greatness and sublimity of our sacrifice. What is there of great and glorious in our religion which does not meet there? There all the works of God are to be found; the splendours of nature in the creation—the almighty word that called worlds into being has not yet died away, it is spoken daily by mortal lips and calls forth, not a world, but the Lord, the Head, the sum and substance of all creation; there is the splendour of grace, uncreated grace itself, with all the ordinances whereby it is communicated to angels and to men, the Author, the model of grace; there is glory in its most beautiful and striking patterns and examples, conferred not on a spiritual being but on the ignoble material of body and matter; there is all this in Christ and of Christ, and He Himself is there with His whole life, His mysteries, His miracles, and above all, with His great sacrifice. What is greater than this

sacrifice, twofold and yet but one? How great in the preparation made for it, foreshadowed as it was from the very beginning of things! How great in its operation—the heavens and the earth bask in the sunshine of its blessings. How great in its accomplishment—in the twofold act of sacrifice the Saviour, in His character of High Priest, places His own body and His sacred Humanity as an oblation on the altar; the one sacrifice being great and sublime through the shedding of blood and bitter suffering that attended its consummation, and also because the whole treasury of redemption was thereby founded and established; the other through the mystic and miraculous manner in which the sacrifice is offered, its marvellous multiplication, and through the power wherewith it is invested of applying the merits of the sacrifice of the Cross to the souls of the faithful;—and yet behold these two, both most marvellous in themselves, combined to form one sacrifice in unparalleled truth and efficacy. Such is our Eucharistic sacrifice. In fact, were we Catholics the smallest nation in the world, banished to the remotest corner of the universe, ignored by everyone, and had we no more land to call our own than just sufficed to erect a tabernacle for our adorable sacrifice, we should still be the greatest, most important people in the world, a great power, acknowledged as such even by Heaven, solely and wholly on account of our sacrifice. And is it not unspeakable condescension on the part of the Saviour, that He should devise and institute a new sacrifice in order that the sacrifice of the Cross might

be brought within our reach, and produce its fruit in us? Is it not an excess of loving-kindness that He should transport His holy sacrifice, from which continents and oceans and centuries separate us, to the present, and in all truth and actuality establish it in our midst, uniting in it all the mysteries of His life, Nazareth and Bethlehem, Thabor and Calvary, so that we have no cause to envy the people of Judea, nor the fortunate disciples who beheld all these miracles, but may ourselves contemplate them with rapture and love? Is it not superabundant condescension and kindness on His part that the Saviour should come Himself to each one of us, even to the last and latest comer, and present to us the price of redemption and all the grace we need? Truly what the cross could not teach us we learn from the altar, that the Redeemer is willing, were it necessary, to lay down His life anew for each one of us, and that he is never weary of repeating His holy sacrifice for us, in order to bestow upon us continually its precious fruits. That is assuredly no longer the radiance and beauty of eternal power and wisdom, but the beauty of eternal charity, which shines forth in our holy sacrifice; it is the voice of infinite charity which appeals to our heart, by sacrifices a thousand times renewed, by inconceivable self-renunciation, by blood and wounds, by priceless and unmerited favours. And is not charity beauty in its highest form?

2

As has been already remarked, the external beauty of our sacrifice consists in the ceremonial wherewith it is presented to our sight. God is the source and author of all truth, goodness and beauty, and the degree in which they participate in His infinite truth and goodness is also the degree of beauty in created things. Nowhere does creation come into such close proximity to the Godhead as in sacrifice, and accordingly there more than anywhere else must beauty be displayed in its fulness. The Eucharistic sacrifice exhibits this beauty in a threefold manner: in the visible oblation, in the sacrificial act, and in the attendant accessories.

The idea of sacrifice is the offering, total surrender and partial change of a visible oblation, in such a manner that it is entirely given up to God, consecrated to God, and made His personal, exclusive property. The oblation does not merely represent a man's possessions, but the man himself, his life, his person and his being, with all he has and all he is. The act of sacrifice, whether it consists in simply blessing, dedicating and offering the oblation, or in immolating, consuming by fire and destroying it, is performed with this object: that of expressing and acknowledging the universal and unbounded power and sovereignty of God over mankind. Since man has received his being and all he possesses from God to hold for God, in the oblation and the ceremony of sacrifice he gives all back to God,

and confesses himself ready to surrender himself and lay down his life should God require it of him, and this all the more if he has forfeited it through mortal sin; nay, apart from sin, his life belongs entirely to God, and by sacrifice man declares that he is prepared to dedicate it wholly to His service, so that there should be no moment in his life, no act within his power and no fibre in his being which is not continually occupied with God. And such a life would certainly be the most beautiful manner of serving God, to be not a dead, but a living sacrifice to the divine glory; for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. But as it is beyond the power of man to do thus in this earthly life, he at least acknowledges the duty by offering sacrifice and giving himself entirely to God by a representative offering. Such is the grand and glorious meaning of sacrifice. It is the most forcible, striking and comprehensive expression of the whole relation of man to God.

Hence it follows in regard to the oblation that, inasmuch as it represents and signifies the individual who presents it, it stands in a certain relationship to him, as it were something of his and part of his possessions, and at the same time something noble and valuable. Now our visible oblation is bread and wine, an oblation whose simplicity enables man to accomplish his sacrifice under all circumstances, and which leaves nothing to be desired in the way of purity, beauty and suitability of expression. Even in the ritual of the Old Covenant the sacrifices of food and fruit were, on account of their

purity, esteemed more highly than those of animals, since the latter always savoured of sin and defilement. Of all the produce of the earth there is nothing more excellent and admirable than bread and wine, in the preparation of which man spends his labour, and by which in turn his body is nourished and his vigour renewed. Hence they portray man very suitably and worthily. But our oblation goes further by way of mystic representation. The pure bread of the Host is formed out of many grains of wheat, and the juice of many grapes and many drops of water are mingled in the chalice; thus our oblation symbolises not one individual only, but the whole Church, the whole of mankind, the whole of creation, above all the body and blood of Christ, nay, Christ Himself, not in part, but whole and entire. Christ, therefore, ever present among men and in the Church, ever living, giving up Himself, immolating Himself anew; that is the grand and glorious import of the simple oblation we offer. Have we not therein a summary of all creation and of the Creator Himself? The bread and wine of the oblation, which, as far as their species and outward appearances are concerned, really continue to exist and remain the same even after the change of their substance into the body and blood of Christ, and thus in union with Christ compose the Eucharistic oblation, procure for us this great and signal privilege, that even after the consecration of the elements has taken place, we may in a true and special sense call Christ *our* sacrifice. This idea does not fail to

reflect distinction and honour on the whole of creation, and to deepen in ourselves the sense of participation in and membership with the holy sacrifice.

And now we turn to the sacrificial act. To an unaccustomed eye our ritual of sacrifice might appear a very intricate and bewildering tissue of prayers and ceremonies. This is, however, not so. We have only to choose the right standpoint whence to view it, and it will be seen to be simple and clear. This standpoint is the act by which the sacrifice is actually accomplished, and that act is the consecration and no other. It alone must not be wanting to any true Mass; it alone is explicitly related by all the evangelists who speak of the institution of the sacrament of the altar; it alone is performed in the words of Christ, and in it the sacerdotal power essentially and peculiarly consists. The consecration has in itself all the properties of the actual sacrifice. By it the oblation is withdrawn from secular use or personal possession and presented to God; by it an interior change is effected in the oblations, inasmuch as their substance is changed into the body and blood of Christ; Christ is made present, and that in a state of mystic death, wherein He gives no natural or external signs of life. However various were the ways of performing the sacrificial act in the sacrifices of the Old Covenant, the act of consecration comprises them all in her ceremonial, and executes them all in a more exalted manner; it blesses, dedicates, hallows, changes, annihilates, above all consummates a

mystic death, and more particularly, calls forth and effects not merely something that is most pleasing to God, that is sacred to God, and exists only for God, but what is essentially and in reality divine, what is God Himself. That is the consecration, our sacrificial act, a most marvellous and truly divine act of omnipotence, to effect which supernatural power is imparted to the word of the visible priest.

This sacred and sublime act does not, however, stand alone, without preparation or accompaniment. It is meet that other ceremonies should precede, accompany and follow it, and therefore the service of the Mass is divided into two other parts beside the Consecration, the preparation and application, the Consecration occupying the middle place between the two, as the chief and central act of sacrifice. The preparatory or introductory part of the Mass, up to the offertory, is a more or less remote preparation of mind for both priest and people, by recollection, prayer and lections. The more proximate preparation begins with the offertory — the offering of the elements for the oblation. From these what is required is taken and by accompanying prayers set apart and prepared for the sacrifice, first with a view to the general object, and then for the specific intention of the sacrifice. When by the consecration the essential act of sacrifice is accomplished, the sacrifice itself is applied and appropriated in a twofold manner. First of all, in three prayers it is presented yet more earnestly to God, and then its application is besought for the benefit of the Church

triumphant, militant and suffering. The Paternoster, the family prayer, so to speak, of the Church concludes this part, and introduces the second application of the then present sacrifice by the Communion, in which not only a share in all the blessings is offered to those who are present, but a participation real and actual in the sacrifice itself, whereby their relationship to and partnership with the sacrifice is confirmed in the most solemn and sublime manner. Such are, in brief review, the different acts, which, according as they are simply necessary to the accomplishment of the sacrifice, or express inward dispositions and feelings, or symbolically represent the mysteries of the Faith, are some practical, some moral, some emblematic in character and surround and adorn the great central act like the graceful branches of the vine. Viewed in this manner the holy sacrifice of the Mass stands aloft like the holy Mount of God; its summit shines resplendent with the radiance of the essential act of sacrifice, while the preparation leads up thereto by two gradations, and the application leads downwards again by the same number of gradations, and loses itself in the plain. There is nothing simpler, clearer, more beautiful than our liturgy!

Grand and imposing accessories group themselves around the sacrificial function, simple as it is in itself and easy to be understood, the object of which is to enhance the external majesty and beauty of the function, to render it more impressive to the senses and striking in effect. In the first place, there are the sacred vessels and church furniture, which,

according to the prescriptions of the Church, are to be of precious metal and rich material, the more so the nearer they are brought into contact with the sacrifice. Fine linen, silver and gold belong to the daily requirements for the holy sacrifice; and what has not the loving reverence of the faithful added to those requirements—works of art of deep significance, the magnificence that earthly wealth can offer. How splendid is the Christian altar in the festive brilliance of lights and flowers, enveloped in a cloud of incense. One can scarcely imagine anything more glorious in heaven. Then comes the service of the altar, the high prerogative and dignity of the Christian priesthood and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. All range themselves round the altar of sacrifice; the rank of each, the office he holds, determines the proximity in which he stands to it, from the doorkeeper of the temple to the Priest and Bishop. What a splendid spectacle of order and beauty is presented when the members of this hierarchy, taking place according to office and dignity, arrayed in magnificent vestments, move slowly and majestically to and fro, performing their several duties in the service of the sanctuary. It is as if the stars of heaven had come down to earth in their multiplicity, diversity and wondrous order! Between the officiating priests and the people the choirs of singers intervene, who, like the inspired prophets of old, voice the music of the spheres in hymns and sweet strains, and formulate the unspoken feelings of adoration, thanksgiving and praise, of supplication and impetration which the solemn ritual of the

sacrifice awakens, bearing them on the wings of song far beyond the earth to the heavens above. Finally, the magnificent ceremonial of the sacrifice takes place within the church, the material building, which may be compared to a beautiful permanent tent, or a sacred, sun-lit grove. What gives glory and dignity to the church is the fact that it is the scene where the holy sacrifice is offered, that it affords for it a worthy place and necessary protection. Without a real, living sacrifice the church is nothing more than a superfluous, costly expense, a melancholy witness to former splendour, the empty grave whence Christ has departed. When has art displayed its grandest, noblest works if not in the erection and decoration of temples for the Christian sacrifice? What can surpass our churches of Gothic and other styles of architecture, in vastness, elegance and majesty?

In fact, nothing has established itself on the face of the earth with such power to captivate the senses, with such lavish expenditure of magnificence, of wealth, of decoration, as our holy sacrifice. It presses everything into its service; it takes possession of everything; it disposes of everything; the gold and treasures of earth, the highest conceptions of artistic genius, the hearts and minds of men. The temples where we offer our sacrifice are the cathedrals of the nations, the art museums of the world, visible palaces, royal residences worthy of God, where Christ is enthroned among His followers. Nothing can be compared to the splendour of our sacrificial tabernacle. And rightly

so; the holy sacrifice is the supreme act of divine worship, the inalienable regal prerogative of God, His visible throne here below; the sacrifice is the great State function wherein the monarchs of earth and heaven meet, God and man; in it Christ Himself is the victim, and His self-immolation is the highest act of His love for God and man. It is, therefore, only meet and right that man should exert himself to the utmost for the purpose of celebrating with due dignity and solemnity this meeting of God and man. And it is all the more incumbent on the Church to spare no pains in order to place vividly before our senses the grandeur, the awfulness, the divine nature of this sacrifice, because the God-man conceals Himself here, because He resigns His power unreservedly into the hands of human ministers, and permits those ministers to make use of the divine omnipotence with unexampled facility. She was bound to act with grave and loving precaution both on behalf of her Lord and of us. And this she has done, inasmuch as "the grand mind of the Church," as a spiritual writer most felicitously says, "conceived that most beautiful of all things outside heaven, the Latin rite of the Adorable Sacrifice, which lifts us out of earth and out of self, and wraps us round in a cloud of mystical sweetness and the sublimities of a more than angelic liturgy, and purified us almost without ourselves, and charmed us with celestial charming" (Faber, The Blessed Sacrament, Book 1, section 5).

Truly there is nothing except heaven itself more

beautiful than our liturgy! It is a majestic fabric, constructed by the Church out of deep, unfathomable truths, heavenly thoughts, blissful sentiments and emotions, symbolical ceremonies and acts, each of which has its special meaning, and which under the changing colours of the ecclesiastical year appear now in the clear, bright white of joy, now in the crimson glow of love and suffering, now in the quiet green and violet of hope and longing, and again in the dark, solemn shade of mourning and grief; a wondrous work it is, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wherein light and colour and fragrance and sound are combined, a grand and marvellous work of divine wisdom, Who, as we know, called into existence the universe, and caused it to grow and be developed in all its manifold and glorious forms out of scanty and simple elements, and attain its mighty proportions, its splendid immensity. Only think of the primary component parts of our sacrifice, what could be more simple? A small quantity of bread and wine and the few short words of consecration. Compare these poor, insignificant commencements with a low Mass, and that with a pontifical High Mass in our cathedrals, and that again with a solemn Papal celebration of High Mass beneath the gilded dome of St Peter's, in presence of the whole Sacred College of Cardinals and of countless priests and prelates, then it will be seen what the Church has made of the sacrifice as far as externals and non-essentials go, a summary of all the beauty, majesty and glory of the visible creation. The places set apart for sacrifice under

the Old Covenant were, in comparison, only a vague, empty, unlovely shadow. There was a temple there, ponderous and gloomy for all its grandeur, with a small holy of holies; there were the outer courts with the altars, whence ascended smoke and vapour; there was a numerous priesthood, all busied with the distracting and fatiguing rites and ceremonies in the service of the altar; there were flocks of sacrificial victims, bleating piteously; there was incessant slaughtering and consuming by fire; there was flowing blood and burning fat — how costly was all this ritual, and how sensuous! What a contrast we have here! What calm and recollection breathes around our altars, nothing is present but innocence, purity, beauty and the light of heaven; all is so spiritual, so hallowed, so divinised, that even a seraph might not disdain to lend his shining hand to the service of the altar. It is to our sacrifice that these words of the prophet refer: "What is the good thing of him, and what is his beautiful thing, but the corn of the elect, and wine springing forth virgins?"[1] And again: "And the sacrifice of Juda and Jerusalem shall please the Lord, as in the days of old."[2] In fact, the solemnisation of our sacrifice is not unworthy to be mentioned with the celestial worship which St John the Divine beheld in the secret revelations vouchsafed to him,[3] where the Lamb, sitting upon the throne, surrounded by the circle of His white-robed saints, continually receives the adoring homage of the denizens of the heavenly courts,

[1] Zach. ix. 17. [2] Mal. iii. 4. [3] Apoc. v. 9 *seq.*

which resound with never-ending Alleluias. And the divine Majesty looks with a gracious eye upon our sacrifice and is well pleased with it; nay, God declares it to be great and glorious, and speaks of it with satisfaction: "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation; for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts." [1]

Such then is the Eucharistic sacrifice, the sacrifice we celebrate, such is its internal and external beauty. Only the lips of angels are capable of worthily interpreting its mystery. We will conclude with three questions.

Is there, we ask, after we have considered all this, is there a mode of divine worship which captivates both our reason and our senses, which answers to all the demands of our nature, corresponds to every frame of mind, and what is most important, comprises our duty towards God and the relationship in which we stand to Him, expresses these so admirably and satisfies our obligations so fully, as does the sacrifice we offer? In it all finds ample, beautiful, solemn expression. "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." [2]

We ask, in the second place: Is there a more truly Christian mode of divine service than holy Mass? a mode of worship instituted by Christ, which reminds us of Christ, brings us near to Christ, unites us to Christ? Impossible! We do not merely

[1] Mal. i. 11. [2] Ps. lxxxiii. 3.

preach Christ, speak of Him. He is present there, only a few paces distant from us; He is there in person, He is there with His life, His mysteries, His graces, His redemption; He is there and hears and sees us, He looks at each one of us severally, closely and compassionately, as from the cross He looked upon Magdalen, the good thief, John and the people around; He prays for us, He blesses us. We can take Him to our heart, we can merge ourselves in Him and obtain from Him mercy, pardon, light, life, love, blessings for our temporal and eternal welfare. What Christ is to us, what He was, He still is to us in the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Finally, we ask: Could there be a more truly Catholic act of divine worship than this in which not merely as individuals, but as parts of a vast whole, we see and feel in concert with all Catholic Christendom collectively, in union with every portion of Christ's boundless kingdom? Where else can we appropriate to ourselves all the grandeur and glory of this union, and at the same time render the power of our intercession available in regard to all and for all? Where is it more forcibly borne in upon us how great our Church is, and what an honour, what a happiness it is to belong to her, than in the Mass? If we would be reminded of her eternal duration, we have but to listen to the prayers and hymns, they are identical with those which were heard in the assemblies of Christians long centuries ago. If we would acquaint ourselves with her extension and her sanctity, let us approach the

altar, there we behold the Church militant, suffering and triumphant; time and eternity are only portions of the kingdom of this all-dominating Power. If we would behold her in her victorious conflict with the world and with hell, let us look at the burning tapers; in days long past they lit up the dark catacombs for the celebration of this same sacrifice, now the sacrifice has emerged into the sunlight, and like that luminary, illumines the globe. If we would behold the Church in her power and clemency, let us see how she raises her hand, blesses the oblation, and with one word parts the heavens and causes God to descend upon her altar. And if we would convince ourselves of the divine nature of the Church, let us look upon her sacrifice itself. There is Christ, the Head of the Church, incarnate God; He is Himself her strength, her might, her sanctity, in this world. Justly has the sacrifice been always regarded as the focus, the furnace where the spirit of piety, where the desire for sacrifice and love for the Catholic Church are kindled. Here, indeed, we have in our possession and before our eyes the whole Church, her hierarchy, her means of grace, her worship, her divine Head with His regal surroundings of time and eternity, of angels and men, of all ages and all races. Therefore, there is the fount and source of eternal, ever-new joy, the unquenchable light of celestial love and enthusiasm, and dead indeed must the heart be of one, who, standing near so great a fire, does not receive from it some little heat.

Thus in the holy sacrifice centres all that we

have of rest and joy on earth; it is the shadow of a great rock in the desert, the high and holy mountain from whence the pilgrims of the world receive light, strength and solace for their journey to the eternal country, where they shall enjoy the vision of God Himself. Were the sun to fall from heaven, it would not be so fateful and fatal a happening for this world of ours as would be the disappearance from among us of the holy sacrifice. The days whereon it was not offered would be the most terrible days for the Church and for Christendom. What, therefore, can be said, not indeed of contempt shown to the holy sacrifice, but of prohibitions and laws which alienate sacred institutions from the object of their foundation, which banish priests, close churches, and abandon the altars of the Lord to the ignominy of desolation and isolation throughout wide districts, so that the grief and yearning of Christian souls cries aloud to Heaven. That every one can imagine and feel for himself.

Words, however, are futile. Complaints die away on the air unheeded by man. Let us therefore turn to the altar, and from the bottom of our hearts call upon the adorable Sacrifice itself in these words of supplication:

O salutaris hostea,
Quae coeli pandis ostium;
Bella premunt hostilia,
Da robur, fer auxilium.

III

ON THE MIRACULOUS MULTIPLICATION OF BREAD, AND COMMUNION

AS the Way of the Cross is often erected in a public garden or grounds, so the holy season of Lent groups her six Sundays, like so many stations of the Cross, around the glorious sepulchre of our Lord. Quinquagesima is the gate whereby we enter into that garden, it bears the solemn inscription: "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man" (St Luke xviii. 31). The station of the first Sunday directs our attention to the desolate and dismal Mount Quarantania, where in solitude our Lord fasted, prayed, and resisted the evil enemy—a suitable picture for Lent; it gives the distinctive character of the season, the key-note to its solemn strains. The mystery of the second Sunday also took place upon a mountain, upon Mount Thabor. The refulgence of His transfiguration sheds a soft, encouraging light upon the lowly path of earthly suffering and action, and illumines the dark close of our Lord's life in Jerusalem, as well as our own last agony and death, with the brightness of a

blessed eternity. After an unpleasant scene of contention with the Pharisees, which the third Sunday sets before us, the station of the fourth Sunday conducts us again on to a mountain, to the verdant, grass-grown slopes of the mountain where the multiplication of bread took place. Mid-Lent is now reached, the culminating point of the season, and from its summit a sweet, quiet gladness descends upon all Christendom. The liturgy of the Sunday is compiled of consolatory words from the prophets and from the psalm which was sung by the pilgrims going up to Jerusalem on their way to the temple, where the Paschal sacrifice was to be celebrated (Ps. cxxi. and lxxxiii.). These verses sound like a greeting to the holy city, whose pinnacles could be descried from afar.

Now why does the Church call to our remembrance the miraculous multiplication of bread in the middle of Lent? In the first place, her intention in doing so may be to mitigate the severity of the preparation for the Paschal Feast by pleasing and attractive mysteries, to encourage those who are wearied with fasting and self-denial by reminding them of the divine succour and solace, which are displayed in so striking a manner, and one so calculated to rejoice the heart, in the mystery of the multiplication of bread. On that account the Sunday is called Laetare Sunday. The second and positive reason is because the first multiplication of bread really occurred in the time of preparation for the Paschal Feast. St John expressly states that "the Pasch, the festival day of the Jews, was near

at hand" (St John vi. 4); and the fact that "there was much grass" on the slopes of the table-land which was the scene of the miracle, points to the reawakening of nature in the spring. The second multiplication of bread must also have taken place very soon after Easter; for between the first and the second, mention is only made of our Lord's missionary journey to Tyre and Sidon, which would probably not take longer than two or three weeks. From Sidon and the parts beyond Galilee our Lord returned to the sea of Tiberias through the coasts of Decapolis (St Matt. xv. 29; Mark vi. 31). The locality was probably the same for both the miracles. On the north-east shore of the lake, not far from the passage of the Jordan and the city of Bethsaida, the range of hills, receding from the lake, formed a small plain, corresponding to the plain of Genesareth on the other side, traversed by three rivulets and consisting of groves of oleanders, which in the early part of the year were in full bloom. Behind that plain rose the heights, on the slope of which our Lord sat with the people, and there He wrought the miracle within sight of the palm-clad banks of the lake.

The question now arises, why our Lord miraculously fed the multitude twice, and just at Paschal-time. The primary reason certainly was that the people were in want of food a second time, as it is again said of them, "they had nothing to eat" (St Mark viii. 1). But assuredly there were other and less obvious reasons. The Saviour doubtless desired to prove His claim to be the true Messiah,

of whom it was generally known that He would give a miraculous bread to His people; and He also intended, by repeating the miracle, to show that the power to perform it was inherent in Himself. But the chief reason was this: He wished to prepare His hearers for the doctrine of the holy Sacrament of the Altar, the promise of which was given between the first and the second multiplication of bread, and which was to be instituted a year later, at the next Paschal-tide. This is why St John places the multiplication of loaves and the walking upon the waters of the lake in connection with the promise of the Holy Eucharist. Both of these miracles are, each one in its way, a most sublime and positive prelude to the miracle of the Holy Eucharist, just as the manna was typical both of the multiplication of bread and of the Eucharist. Our Lord willed to keep His third Paschal Feast in Galilee, because the hatred and rage of His enemies had reached such a pitch that it was not safe for Him to be seen in Jerusalem (St John vii. 1, 8), and this festival was to be the one preceding His fourth and last Pasch. In fact, the occurrences of this third Paschal festival celebrated in Galilee, with the multiplication of bread, the promise of the Eucharist; with the outburst of popular enthusiasm, which aimed at making Him a king; and with the almost immediate falling away of the people and many of His disciples, afford a striking image of what was to happen on the fourth and next Paschal festival.

Our Lord also intended to prepare the minds of His hearers for the institution of the Eucharist by

the multiplication of bread. The Church borrows this idea and makes this intention her own, when she sets the miraculous feeding of the multitude before us in the middle of Lent. Her object is gradually to direct our thoughts to the Christian Festival of Easter, which is observed by the reception of the adorable Sacrament of the Altar. And this affords us an opportunity, whilst considering the mystery of the multiplication of bread, to put forward a few thoughts concerning the Eucharist as Communion. Both mysteries, that of the multiplication of bread, and that of the Eucharist as a sacrament, have three things in common: first the motive, secondly the nature of the two miracles themselves, and thirdly the effects produced by them.

1

The motive which inspired both the mysteries constitutes the first feature of similarity and harmony between them.

In the multiplication of bread the motive was obviously kindly feeling, clemency, compassion for the multitude who had evinced such touching attachment to the Saviour, and in consequence of it were exposed to no slight temporal want. The excitement aroused by the beheading of John the Baptist and by the miracles that the Apostles wrought on their first missionary journey, was so great, that our Lord deemed it advisable to quit Galilee, the domain of Herod Antipas, for a short

time. He therefore took ship and passed from the west bank of the lake to the east side, where, under the rule of Herod Philipus, He would be in greater safety. The people, who saw our Lord enter the boat and take an easterly course, would not leave Him, but followed by the road which ran alongside the lake, and rounding the north shore reached the desert plain in the vicinity of the town of Bethsaida in great numbers even before the Saviour Himself got there.[1] Touched by this sight, our Lord spent the whole day in teaching the people, until evening closed in, and the Apostles, reminding Him of the lateness of the hour, suggested that He should send away the multitudes that they might seek food and lodging in the neighbouring villages and towns. And when, in answer to our Lord's proposal that they should give them the necessary food, the Apostles reported that, so small was their own provision, it would be impossible for them to do so unless they went to the nearest towns in search of bread, the Saviour wrought the miracle of the multiplication of bread.[2] On the second occasion when He did the same, the motive of compassion which actuated our Lord was still more apparent. On His journey from Sidon through the coasts of Decapolis, great multitudes followed Him on foot out of the cities to the sea, where a regular encampment was formed, to which every form of human misery had sent a contingent. Sick persons of every description—dumb, blind, lame—were there. The

[1] St Matt. xiv. 13, 14; St Mark vi. 33, 34.
[2] St Matt. xiv. 16; St Mark vi. 37.

sufferers were cast down, we are told, at the Saviour's feet, whether through the bearers' exhaustion, or through haste and precipitation on account of the crowds thronging around. Our Lord healed them all, so that the people, seeing those who were cured walking about, marvelled and glorified God.[1] Healing and instruction occupied several days,[2] and naturally the want of provisions was felt.[3] Then our Lord called together His disciples, and said: "I have compassion on the multitudes, because they continue with me now three days, and have not what to eat."[4] Thereupon He worked the second miracle of multiplication of bread. Thus it was kindness, compassion and mercy that prompted the miracle, and indeed preventive mercy; for Christ anticipated the need and foretold the miracle to the Apostles[5]; in His omniscient mercy He knew precisely how long each individual had been with Him and how far each was from home[6]; and His all-embracing mercy and lovingkindness did not merely bestow benefits on the soul, but on the body also.[7]

This multitude of people in a lonely, desert place beside the sea, without food, amongst whom were so many lame, blind, maimed, weary and hungering, just like the children of Israel of old in the

[1] Matt. xv. 30, 31.
[2] *Ibid.* xv. 32.
[3] *Ibid.* xv. 32; Mark viii. 2.
[4] Matt. xv. 32; Mark viii. 2.
[5] Matt. xiv. 16; Mark vi. 37.
[6] Matt. xv. 32; Mark viii. 3.
[7] Matt. xv. 32; Mark viii. 3.

"great and terrible wilderness,"[1] is only an image of the world and the whole human race on this earth in regard to their spiritual needs. The soul must live as well as the body. But the "meat that perishes cannot satisfy the soul."[2] Wherefore unless the Lord succours us we faint in the way; for we all come from afar, and we have far to go. Yet "the merciful and gracious Lord hath given food to them that fear him,"[3] in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar, of which both the manna and the multiplication of bread are typical. Thus it was equally the goodness and mercy of God which instituted and ordained the Eucharist for the nourishment of our souls.

And now this leads us nearer to the interior motive of the Eucharist as a sacrament and communion. The sacraments are channels for the communication of grace to mankind. Grace is in itself the communication of the supernatural divine life to the creature. Therefore the Eucharist is the most sublime and exalted sacrament, the aim, the seal, the crown of all sacraments, because it is not merely a created means of communication of resemblance to God, but in truth and reality it imparts God Himself in Christ. What renders this sacrament so marvellous and so sublime is that Christ, who is Himself God, is there as the food of our souls. Grand and exalted as is this fact, yet it does not hold an isolated position in our religious system. On the contrary: all other parts in their supernatural development gravitate towards this

[1] Deut. viii. 15, 16. [2] John vi. 27. [3] Ps. cx. 5.

most glorious centre, or look back to it. Even in the natural order it is this same creative power which imparts life and operates the preservation and activity of life. The very conception of religion points to the communication of Himself on God's part to man, and to the restoration of himself by man to God; and thus it comprises within its compass the highest gift of God to man, and the actual union of man with God. Even in Paganism and Judaism the idea of a communion effected in the consumption of what was offered in sacrifice was not unknown. Consumption of the flesh of the victim was a completion of the sacrifice on the part of the Deity, and indicated a gracious bringing of man into union with Him. The Incarnation first originated the idea of the Eucharist as communion, as it was its type and foreshadow. Communion may be said to be a continuation, extension, completion of the Incarnation, accomplished in the degree rendered possible by the nature of each individual man. Moreover, the mystery of grace, the supernatural life is a life in Christ. Through grace Christ is born in us and begins to live in us, and that in a comprehensive, most true and vigorous manner. Grace is nothing else than the created image of the divine sonship in us. Now if the supernatural life of grace is a life in Christ, it is only meet that the supernatural life should be sustained and promoted by supernatural nourishment, and thus the Christian life needs to be sustained by Christ Himself. Life can only be sustained by the reception of homogeneous matter.

Finally, as in its commencement, so the consummation and the goal of the supernatural life are closely connected with communion. Heaven is the goal of the supernatural life, the immediate vision of God, the actual possession and enjoyment of God, the noblest and most glorious development of all the wondrous germs and potentialities which lie dormant during the life of grace here below. But already here below for a goal so great and glorious a worthy preparation must be made, and if the God-man Himself is the beginning and the end of the life of grace, then it is only just that He should also be its centre, and Himself the most excellent means of its advancement. All that is effected in Holy Communion. There Christ is Himself actually the great and precious nourishment. Communion is the most positive possession of God here below, and a most admirable prelude to the blissful union with God in heaven. Eating, partaking of food, is symbolical of love and union. Because beside the hypostatic union in Christ, and beside the beatific union with God in heaven, there is no more intimate union with the Godhead than that which, in the order of nature, is produced by the assimilation of the food we take, therefore Christ has, as it were, thrown Himself into the stream which nourishes our physical life, and has instituted this Holy Sacrament under the form of an aliment to be consumed. Thus all the mysteries of our religion are in beautiful harmony with communion, and in it find their glorious expansion, completion or consummation.

Kindness, compassion, mercy were the motive of the multiplication of bread. In communion also lovingkindness, benignity, mercy are motives, and infinitely more; in it they take the form of charity. In order to be bountiful and merciful it was not necessary to institute the Sacrament of the Altar or Holy Communion. The Eucharist as a sacrament is not merely an alms bestowed in consideration of our weakness and indigence, but a pledge and a brilliant proof of the most generous and transcendental charity. "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (St John xiii. 1).

2

The second point of comparison between the Eucharist and the two multiplications of bread is in the miracle itself, and in fact in the first place with regard to the object of its operation, and secondly in regard to the manner and means whereby the result was brought about.

In both instances of the multiplication of bread, it is bread, and that a miraculous bread, which is the immediate result of the miracle, just as the manna, the ancient type of communion, was also a miraculous bread, and for that reason called the Bread of Heaven, the Bread of Angels.[1] Thus, what was peculiar to the miracle of the multiplication of bread was that, as in the case of the miracle of the manna

[1] Exod. xvi. 4; Ps. lxxvii. 24, 25; Wisd. xvi. 20.

and the miracle at Cana, it took effect on the substance of the things and therefore presented an absolute miracle, but not in the sense that the substance of the bread was produced. In the feeding of the multitude our Lord did not create a fresh supply of bread. What all the thousands ate from first to last was the seven or five loaves and the small fishes which were at hand previous to the miracle. The object or the result of the miracle was consequently no creation or transmutation, but only a multiplication of the substance of bread. This miracle, therefore, merely retained and multiplied what was already there present.

In regard, however, to the manner in which the miracle of the multiplication of bread was accomplished, the first circumstance worthy of notice is that it was simple and unostentatious. Instead of the solemn announcement preceding the miracle of the manna,[1] there was, except the confidential consultation with the Apostles, which was only intended to emphasise the natural impossibility of feeding the multitude under existing circumstances, no previous intimation of the miracle. No less quietly and inconspicuously was the miracle itself accomplished. The action of the Saviour and the words of blessing He pronounced are to all appearance much the same as the grace at table in which the pious father of a family asks a blessing upon the food of which his children are about to partake.[2]

[1] Exod. xvi. 6.

[2] Matt. xiv. 16, 17; xv. 32, 33; Mark viii. 3-5; Luke ix 19; John vi. 5-9.

The second circumstance to be remarked in the miracle of the multiplication of bread is that in it our Lord makes use of the assistance of the Apostles, not only inasmuch as He consults with them, and employs them to make the people sit down in ranks and companies, but inasmuch as He gives the miraculous bread to be distributed by their hands.[1] In fact, many exegetists assume, and with much probability in their favour, that the bread multiplied itself in the hands of the Apostles, or the multiplication began in our Lord's hands and continued in those of the Apostles. The third notable circumstance in the feeding of the multitude was that the miraculous bread was dispensed with royal liberality and generosity. Our Lord worked the miracle twice, and each time on behalf of a great multitude of people of all ages and both sexes.[2] For all, without exception, the miracle was wrought: for believers and unbelievers, for sinners and just men, for the fervent and the tepid, for the thankful and the unthankful. The miraculous bread was distributed with the greatest profusion, so that each one could take all that he needed, and all "did eat and were filled,"[3] and what remained over and above was proportionately much more than the original number of loaves.

All this now offers many points of comparison with the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, and in all

[1] Matt. xiv. 19; xv. 36; Mark vi. 41; Luke ix. 16; John vi. 10.

[2] Matt. xiv. 21; xv. 38.

[3] *Ibid.* xiv. 20; xv. 37; Mark vi. 8, 42.

the infinite superiority of the latter appears. In it, according to the words of our Lord when He promised it and instituted it,[1] the bread is nothing less than Christ Himself, His body and blood under the appearances of bread and wine, the true Bread of Life, as He Himself says, which comes down from heaven and fills the soul with immortality and felicity. In consequence of this the miracle is in this case much greater, because it is not merely a multiplication of the substance—that is, of the body and blood of Christ—but above all a complete conversion of the substance, since in the place of the substance of bread the substance of Christ's body becomes present. Thus this miracle unites the glories of the miracle of Cana, of the multiplication of bread and of the manna, and that indeed in an infinite degree. As in the multiplication of bread all the thousands partook of the same loaves, so in the Sacrament of the Altar all receive the same body of Christ; and as in the former the miracle was wrought on something already existing, so in the eucharistic transubstantiation bread already present upon the altar is converted into the body of Christ, and the accidents of bread at least remain present and apparent.

There is likewise a correspondence between the circumstance under which the eucharistic change is accomplished and those attending the multiplication of bread. First and foremost they are alike in simplicity and inconspicuousness. The simple ceremonial whereby the transubstantiation in the

[1] John vi. 35, 48, 51, 56; Matt. xxvi. 26, 28.

Mass is accomplished might be thought to be copied from the ritual at the multiplication of bread, were it not that the latter as a type of the former took its character from its antitype. The miraculous feeding of the multitude was, however, in itself a more conspicuous miracle. To every one of the thousands who were present it was visible and tangible, and at the end the baskets full of fragments bore visible and eloquent testimony to it. The eucharistic miracle is on the contrary perceptible to no one. A morsel of bread, a little wine, and a few whispered words are all the sensible appliances needed for this stupendous miracle, and the secret, mysterious action at work in these elements does not occasion the slightest change in their sensible surroundings. The flowers still emit their sweet fragrance, the candles upon the altar burn as brightly as before, the sun's beams throw the same halo around the species; to all appearance nothing has happened. And yet the greatest, most marvellous, most inconceivable thing has happened. All who are present kneel in lowly adoration before those species which, but a few moments before, it would have been a revolting act of idolatry to worship. But it is precisely by this that the eucharistic miracle shows itself to be a far higher one, for were it not so, no necessity would have existed to prepare for it and lead up to it by a visible miracle. It is exactly by its unapparent character that it asserts its superior rank as a spiritual miracle. The Eucharist is on the other hand the sacrament of benignity and kindness to men, wherein our

Lord, in order to unite Himself more intimately with us, divests Himself not merely of the splendour of His divinity and His shining cohort of angels, but even of the visible majesty of His humanity. Never could He have made our heart His actual dwelling-place had He not disguised Himself under the appearance of bread. We men here on earth are such poor creatures that our Lord must needs abase Himself all the more, the more He desires to unite Himself to us. As a mother must stoop to be childish with her child, to think and speak in a childish manner, to be a child with her child if she would hold converse with him and make herself understood by him, so must the Lord of Sovereign Majesty act towards us children of men.

The second circumstance, which consists in the co-operation of human agents in the consummation of the eucharistic miracle is yet more real and active. What the Apostles did on the occasion of the multiplication of bread was only a faint type of the activity which the Catholic priesthood exercises in regard to the Holy Eucharist. Then it was the power of the Lord essentially that worked the miracle, and so it is now. But now the word of the priest appears as a factor in the consummation of the eucharistic sacrifice, whereas in the multiplication of bread the Apostles discharged the office of deacons rather than any other. Only through the hands of the priesthood does the eucharistic Saviour come within reach of the world. It is in truth both of these, the Saviour and the priest, that she has to thank for the Eucharist. It is a further step in our

Lord's drawing near to mankind, and an immense privilege for us. In the first place it is an honourable privilege, inasmuch as so many of the sons of men are exalted to be ministers of the activity of the God-man, and shine in the refulgence of this divine dignity; it is a privilege also because of the facility thus afforded us of partaking of the divine mysteries. In this as in many other respects we are privileged in not having in our poverty, our spiritual hunger, our earthly troubles, to follow the Saviour about, like the Jews of old, from one part of the country to another. We find our Lord in every one of His priests, and He transforms every church, every chapel in a far higher sense into the mountains where the multitudes were fed.

And here the third circumstance which accompanied the multiplication of bread comes before our notice, and indeed in a higher degree. Here in the Eucharist our Lord for the first time fully reveals all the attributes of His regal character, His wisdom, His provident and all-embracing charity, His generosity and munificence. It is no new idea, but a very true one, and one which we shall do well to bear in mind, that it would already be more benignity and kindness than we could expect if our Lord only gave Himself in Holy Communion to each of the faithful once in a lifetime, or only once in a year, and that only at one place in the world, and indeed only to pious, fervent Christians. But now our Lord is in countless places, nay, we may say everywhere, and He gives Himself to everyone, as often as each individual desires, and whether he

comes with love and earnest desire, or with tepidity and indifference, and departs without any heartfelt thankfulness. Thus we see how far the miracle of the Eucharist surpasses the miracle of the multiplication of bread and even the gift of the manna, in extension, breadth of range and every other note of power and goodness. The Holy Eucharist is in very truth the great banquet to which all mankind are invited, whose duration is until the end of time, whose locality is the whole earth and at which nothing less is provided to be partaken of than the truly royal, nay divine, aliment, the sacred Body and precious Blood of Christ. "Take ye and eat, this is my body" (Matt. xxvi. 26). He does indeed only speak of His body and blood; and does He not with these give us everything: His soul, His humanity, His grace, His merits, all that He did and suffered for us from the manger to the cross, His heaven and His divinity? All becomes ours in one moment, we can touch it with our hands and lay it in our heart. In the same way the bridegroom at the altar says to his chosen bride: "Take this ring." And with that ring he gives his property, his title, his dignities and his person. Our heart becomes the living throne of the godhead through Holy Communion. Who can conceive the treasures, the riches lavished on us in one single communion?

3

There yet remains the third point of comparison between the multiplication of bread and

the Eucharist; the effects produced by the two miracles.

The immediate and material effect of the miraculous multiplication of the bread was that all who were present and ate of that bread were filled, as the evangelists observe.[1] This was the actual proof of the multiplication of bread. This material effect was naturally followed by a moral effect, and that a great and extraordinary one, because the miracle was so apparent and so striking, because it continued for a long time, and was repeated in the case of everyone who partook of the bread. Under the impression produced by this miracle, which naturally recalled to mind the feeding of the people with manna in Moses' time, the opinion was immediately voiced that the Saviour was the great Prophet who was promised, the Messiah who was to come. The Galileans, who probably composed the majority of those who were miraculously fed, impressive and excitable as they were by nature, instantly thought they would proclaim the Saviour King of Israel then and there.[2] This idea evidently evinced gratitude, attachment and enthusiastic devotion to the person of our Lord, whose regal character had been so gloriously displayed. The desire was justified by the cause that gave rise to it, the conviction or mere suspicion of His messianic dignity; but it was wrong in this, that the people supposed the kingdom of the Messiah to be a temporal kingdom, and wanted to establish

[1] Matt. xiv. 20; xv. 37; Mark vi. 42; viii. 8; Luke ix. 17.
[2] John vi. 14.

it by force. There was in it a mixture of what was true and false, good and reprehensible, of gratitude and self-seeking, of faith and unfaith, as our Lord Himself told them on the following day in Capharnaum.[1] As soon as their attachment was put to the test, they fell away.[2] This was only a repetition of the effect which the miracle of the manna had upon the Israelites in the desert, that foreshadowed the effect of the Holy Eucharist.

Now in order in some measure to describe the effects worked by communion, we must keep in view as a fundamental truth that communion is an actual union with Christ under the form of partaking of food. This marks clearly the position and operation of the Eucharist in the wondrous system of the sacraments. All the sacraments have for their object the life of grace, the communicating, maintaining, promoting and developing of that life. Baptism and Penance give the life of grace, Confirmation perfects it, the Eucharist sustains it. What material food is to our physical life that the Eucharist is to our spiritual life. As bodily food maintains, restores, develops, fortifies and heightens our temporal life, so the Eucharist acts upon the whole of our supernatural life, and that all the more because the food of our souls is naught else but Christ Himself, the source and author of all grace. Our divine Lord Himself always represents the Eucharist as the Sacrament of Life. "I am the Bread of Life[3]; if any man eat of this bread he may not

[1] John vi. 26, 27, 34. [2] *Ibid.* vi. 42, 53.
[3] *Ibid.* vi. 35, 50, 51, 52.

die[1]; he shall live for ever,[2] he hath everlasting life,[3] he abideth in me, and I in him."[4] This must not however be understood as if the Eucharist in the first place gave life, for to do that there are other sacraments. This sacrament is, on account of what it contains, of such dignity and sublimity that it supposes the life of grace to have been already received. It is in fact precisely because of this dignity that it is in a certain measure the end and object of the sacraments and of man himself, and consequently it does not simply perform the work of a necessary means, but operates results of a higher nature in the order of grace.

Of those results two are specially noteworthy. In the first place Holy Communion protects the life of grace and sustains it against sin, which is the death of the supernatural life. From venial sin, whereby the life of grace is enfeebled, we are directly and positively freed by this sacrament, according to the decree of the Council of Trent (Sess. 13, c. 1); moreover it wards off mortal sin, because it removes spiritual infirmities and imparts vigour to resist external temptations, and its action is yet deeper and more efficacious since it weakens and finally destroys evil concupiscence, the root of sin within us. It is the general teaching of the Fathers and theologians, and an acknowledged fact taught us by experience, that no passion and no temptation can ultimately resist frequent and worthy reception of the adorable Sacrament of the Altar.

[1] John vi. 50.
[2] *Ibid.* vi. 52.
[3] *Ibid.* v. 55, 59.
[4] *Ibid.* v. 57.

This is explained in various ways. Some consider it to be a mediate effect of the increase of sanctifying grace and the strengthening of charity and the higher life of grace; others are of opinion that it results from the sweetness of sensible devotion which is ofttimes experienced in Holy Communion, and whereby our lower, sensuous nature perceives that in the company of the Saviour exquisite joys and delights are to be found, and thus the craving for earthly pleasures is quenched, and the desire awakened for supernatural consolations; others again suppose an immediate influence of the sacrament on the lower powers and passions of the soul and the body; blunting the stimulus of passion and lessening the receptivity of our nature for sensual impressions and enjoyments; and on the other hand awakening tranquillity, sobriety, judgment chaste and virginal dispositions, and this through the holy thoughts and ideas which are evoked in our imagination. But much more probable is the assumption that all these blessings are the effect of a series of actual graces which the reception of Holy Communion places within our reach, not only those graces that are imparted at the time of communion, but graces to which we obtain a right through receiving communion, graces that are granted us later on when occasion arises for them, in times of conflict and temptation, graces whereby we are enlightened, strengthened, defended, whereby even dangers are averted and seductive occasions held aloof in which we might

have succumbed, so many graces in fact that they might be called a very Providence.

It is now a long time since we knelt at the altar, hours and days have already elapsed since we received Holy Communion, and see, holy thoughts and resolutions occur to our hearts and minds like a luminous afterglow; when temptation comes, it rebounds from our will as from a plate of steel, and if aught that is seductive approaches, it passes by without making the slightest impression. These are the effects of Holy Communion for the defence of the life of grace within the soul. Communion may fittingly be compared to the pillar of cloud, which almost like a rational being protected the people of Israel during their journey through the wilderness, spreading a sheltering shade over the camp by day, and at night appearing as a pillar of fire, a beacon in the darkness; going before the fugitives to the Red Sea, dividing the water, then standing behind while the people passed over, enlightening the night for them, and like a protecting rearguard causing the destruction of Pharao's pursuing hosts. There is no doubt that through no other channel do so many graces flow to us as through Holy Communion. Through it pre-eminently the graces of predestination are applied to the soul. This truth gives the explanation of our Lord's words: "Except you eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you" (John vi. 54), and also the motive of the precept of the Church, that the faithful should receive the Lord's body at least

once a year at the season of Easter. In fact Holy Communion is so indispensable for the maintenance of the life of grace that the reception of it may be termed a moral obligation for all who desire to persevere in a state of grace. And here a most consolatory thought presents itself for the relief of anxious souls who are fearful about the validity of their communion if it seems to produce no perceptible fruit in them. Let them remember that if we derived no other benefit from communion than that of being preserved for a long time in a state of sanctifying grace, that is the first and foremost fruit for which the sacrament was insituted and is in itself an effect so great and glorious, that we can never be thankful enough to God, when we consider how weak we are, and to how many temptations we are exposed, and how precious and exalted a state is that of sanctifying grace.

In the second place Holy Communion does not only maintain the life of grace, it augments and invigorates it. The Sacrament of the Altar has this in common with several other of the sacraments, yet the manner and means whereby the Sacrament of the Altar effects the increase of sanctifying grace is peculiar to itself; it is, in fact, through the increase of charity. Charity is the highest and most exalted virtue, it is the stimulus and primary force of the will and of the whole mental and spiritual life. To increase and heighten charity is tantamount to fortifying the life of grace [1]

[1] Suarez, Euch. disp. 63, sect. 6.

in every respect. This sublime effect is fully in keeping with the excellence of this sacrament, and is a natural consequence of its nature and distinctive character, because it is the most real and intimate union with Christ. According to St Thomas this sacrament is moreover specially productive of charity because it is a memorial of the bitter Passion and Death of Christ, and nothing is so provocative of charity as voluntary suffering for love of another. Finally, in this sacrament our Lord reveals so magnificently all the treasures of His charity, and in it His charity speaks to us so forcibly and so eloquently, that nothing could have the power to excite in us a reciprocal love, if this holy sacrament fails to do so, this focus of the charity wherewith the God-man disposes all on our behalf. Thus charity is the fairest fruit of this sacrament.

But where there is charity, there are also the effects of charity. First and foremost of these are tranquillity and repose. The soul has found the good thing that she sought. She rests on the heart of Jesus, her final end. What would she fain have more? This peace often assumes the character of a certain feeling of satisfaction and a noble sense of dignity. As when the hunger of our animal nature has been satisfied, the sight of food, however delicious, no longer excites in us any wish to partake of it, so the heart also regards with complete indifference all the pleasures of the world, and neither the gain nor loss of temporal goods disturbs her perfect repose. She has made acquaint-

ance with something better, and knows how to appreciate the gifts vouchsafed to her. Thus communion imparts sentiments of truly Christian nobility. Where there is charity, there is also in the second place joy, that feeling of content and delight in the boon that has been attained. If the generous juice of the vine rejoices the heart of man, how much more the chalice of salvation and of immortality? The sacraments of Penance and of the Altar are the true sources of consolation for the world, the Sacrament of the Altar more especially, because it is a partaking of celestial aliment at the table of the Lord, and the renewal and consummation of our friendship with Jesus and our love for Him. Finally where there is charity, there is also courage, resolution and fortitude to undertake and to suffer great things; equanimity and intrepidity in circumstances of sacrifice and danger, and an insatiable thirst to do something for the glory of God and for the extension of Christ's kingdom. In a word: by means of Holy Communion that intimate union, that spiritual assimilation, one might almost say that divinisation, gradually takes place which our Lord Himself proposes as the highest and choicest fruit of the sacrament, when He says: "As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me" (John vi. 58), or in other words: As I have a divine life from my Father and have communicated it to my Humanity, so he who receives me in this sacrament shall share in my divine life, and not only shall he have in him-

self the image of my divine Sonship, but gradually he will learn to think, to judge, to feel and to act as I do; "he shall live, yet not now he, but I shall live in him" (Gal. ii. 20), and in him I shall be all in all. That is assuredly the culminating point of Christian perfection.

Not only is this transformation into Christ and this sublime conformity to the divine image the portion of the individual Christian, the whole Church participates in it through the Holy Eucharist. The higher impetus of charity, the desire of sacrifice as it displays itself in the superabundance of Christian fraternal charity, in taking the vows of the religious life and in the glories of martyrdom, these are but beams proceeding from the eucharistic sun. Nowhere else are they to be found, because nowhere else is the Eucharist to be found. The Eucharist is the divine power of the Church, ever present, never inactive, ever working, energising in all the ends of the earth, drawing all to itself, assimilating all to itself. Through its nature and its effects the Eucharist is not merely a preparation for heaven, but a foretaste of heaven. Heaven consists in the true and actual possession of God, and that the Eucharist is also; heaven is blissful love, and so is the Eucharist; heaven is peace, joy, rapturous delight, and so is the Eucharist; heaven is immutable repose, and so is the Eucharist; in heaven immortality is to be found, and also in the Eucharist, for it implants the seed of immortality even in our mortal frame, and by gladsome, unceasing activity for the greater glory

of God a foretaste of heaven is given us in the Eucharist.

Thus we have placed before us the multiplication of bread and Holy Communion, type and antitype, symbol and reality. Our Lord observed the third and fourth Paschal festival by the Eucharist celebration and the prelude thereto. The Church does likewise. She celebrates the festival of Easter by preparation for the reception of the Eucharist. This is in reality the Christian pasch[1] and the commencement of the spiritual springtide in the world. Nature, stirred by the mild breath of spring, awakes from her winter sleep and rises up to new life. Sun and wind, light and balmy air are at work everywhere burying the bareness of winter beneath a new and abundant covering of verdure and flowers, calling out the splendours of a new life upon the earth. At Easter life begins again to stir and put forth leaves in the depths of the Christian soul. At the sound of the Easter bells the seal of many an icebound grave is broken, the sleeper is awakened from his spiritual torpor, illumined by the clear shining of the risen Lord. And as the devastation caused by a terrible landslip soon disappears beneath the silent, continuous operation of Nature's forces, and once again the whole region is clad with verdure and new life, so the ruin caused by sin is cancelled by the all-conquering and blessed influence of the life-giving sacraments. The wilderness again begins to flourish like the lily. Thus it is everywhere throughout Christendom. Easter is

[1] 1 Cor. v. 7.

the yearly foreshadowing of the great Day of Resurrection. At the breath of the Spirit of Life, "which blows from the four winds," the dead shall arise —"an exceeding great army"[1]—and enter upon a new life. Will these live who have been raised from the dead, will they not again lay down in a deathlike slumber? They shall live if they do not neglect to eat of the Bread of Life. "He that eateth this bread shall live for ever."[2]

[1] Ezechiel xxxvii. 10. [2] John vi. 59.

IV

ON THE PERPETUAL PRESENCE OF OUR LORD IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

(FOR THE FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI)

THE strains of joy and victory that resounded at Easter have not yet passed away, and we are preparing for another festival of gladness, the Feast of Corpus Christi. The joyous Easter weeks commenced with the glorious Resurrection, yet even in the silent, pathetic solemnisation of Holy Thursday there entered an anticipation of their jubilant close, the Feast of Corpus Christi, of which the secret germs lay hidden there.

Holy Thursday and Corpus Christi—how like and yet how unlike they are! The one is the plaintive introit, the other the triumphant final chord; the one is the unobtrusive, modest bud, the other the majestic unfolding of the mystical rose of the Sacrament of the Altar. On Holy Thursday Holy Church commemorates the institution of the adorable Sacrament of the Altar, but with subdued and melancholy ceremonial. The sanctuary is draped with the dark veils of mourning; the sepulchre is there, a visible monument of grief, and the procession that approaches it intones, not

the triumphant strains of the *Lauda Sion*, but the solemn notes of the *Vexilla Regis*; and instead of exposing the Blessed Sacrament, the Church withdraws it from public veneration. All this is a repetition of what happened on the first Holy Thursday. In quiet and retirement, almost at the last moment of His life, the Redeemer takes occasion to ensure His actual presence to the world by carrying into execution His design of an entirely new manner of existence in the Eucharist; immediately afterwards the terrible storm of His Passion broke upon the scene, and concealed from the eyes of the world the precious treasure until, after the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord, the descent of the Holy Spirit revealed it and manifested the Church to the world. Thus the Church acts. When Good Friday with its mournful silence is over, the Easter bells have pealed forth, the springtide of souls has dawned in the footsteps of the risen Lord, and from the meridian altitude of the ecclesiastical year the Holy Ghost has been poured forth, shedding around warmth and joy, then the Church bethinks herself of the sweet, the noble treasure committed to her charge and hidden from sight, at the time when coming spring proclaimed its speedy advent; now she brings it forth, she displays it that all may pay homage to it; the solemn *Vexilla Regis* is not now heard, it is replaced by the triumphant *Lauda Sion*; the dark vestments of Holy Thursday are forgotten in the magnificent and majestic display of the jubilant procession on the Feast of Corpus Christi.

The Sublimity of the Holy Eucharist

We will now devote our attention awhile to this beautiful festival. It is the festival on which all that is bright and fair unites to magnify the holy Sacrament of the Altar, it is the memorial, the recognition and appreciation, the thanksgiving of and for all that is grand and glorious embodied in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the great sacrifice of alliance of the New Covenant, it is the first and most sublime Sacrament, nay, the Queen of Sacraments, the aim, the crown, the seal of all the sacraments; finally it is the permanent abode of God with us. Now for all these gifts and benefits the Feast of Corpus Christi is intended to be a public acknowledgment and a solemn thanksgiving, above all for that greatest of all favours, the continual presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The history of the introduction of the festival gives proof of this, and what is specially distinctive of it is the solemn ceremonial and the octave; for all the ceremonial and liturgical observances are grouped around the continual presence of the Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament and look to it as a necessary foregone assumption. Thus the spirit of the Feast of Corpus Christi is essentially one of joy, of triumph, and holy exultation because of the actual, continual dwelling, resting, ruling of God amongst men; and the enthusiastic expression of thankfulness for all the benefits which that presence confers on us. The Church forgets as it were, for very joy, her exile, the labours and conflicts of her life on earth; for a moment the Church Militant is blended with the Church Triumphant.

We will now take this real, perpetual presence of

our Lord in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar for the subject of our meditation, and consider first: the truth and actuality of this mystery; secondly, its agreement and harmony in every respect with the other truths of our religion; and finally the immense benefits which it brings with it.

I

What, according to the teaching of the Church, do we then understand by this perpetual presence? We understand by it that after the consecration in the Mass our Lord is really and truly present under the eucharistic species and also remains there, apart from the sacrifice and sacramental consumption, as long as the species remain. In opposition to this heretics assert that our Lord is present only at the moment when the Sacrament is received, neither before nor after. The Church on the contrary maintains that in virtue of the words of consecration the Lord is there and remains there as long as the species remain uncorrupt, in whatever place the Sacrament may be. This article of faith is simply a conclusion and natural consequence of the words of consecration, or rather it is an explanation of their purport. These words do indeed signify that the body of the Lord is there, without any reference to the dispensing and reception of the Sacrament, and what they signify they also effect. There is, in fact, an important and weighty distinction between the Sacrament of the Altar and the

other sacraments. Whereas the latter only exist at the moment of administration and reception, and have no interior value except in regard to the graces they convey; all that the Eucharist is becomes substantially present immediately upon the sacrificial consecration, and it remains thus present irrespective of whether, by being dispensed and received, it is or is not made a medium of grace to the receiver. Thus, consummation and administration are in the Eucharist independent of one another.

The Council of Trent points out this peculiarity of the Holy Eucharist, and dwells with grave emphasis on the truth and efficacy of the words of sacramental institution, adding: "For the Apostles had not as yet received the Eucharist from the hand of the Lord when nevertheless Himself affirmed with truth that to be His body which He presented to them. And this faith has ever been in the Church of God, that immediately after the consecration, the veritable Body of our Lord and His veritable Blood, together with His soul and divinity, are under the species of bread and wine." [1]

The council accentuates the fact that it has been from time immemorial a custom in the Church, and one enjoined by numerous councils, that the Eucharist should be reserved and carried to the sick.[2] Moreover this truth of the perpetual presence is also confirmed by another article of faith formulated by the same council, that, in accordance with

[1] Conc. Trid. Sess. 13, c. 3.
[2] *Ibid.* c. 6.

the custom received in the Church veneration and actual worship must be paid to this Holy Sacrament, and that consequently the introduction of the Festival of Corpus Christi and the solemn procession is a most pious and commendable ordinance.[1] In fact, the most ancient customs observed in the Church bear witness to the reality of the perpetual presence. Thus, in the earliest ages the Eucharist was carried to the sick and to imprisoned confessors by deacons; in the first centuries of Christianity the faithful were even permitted to keep it in their houses and to take it with them as a protection on journeys; also, it was reserved in the churches in costly vessels for the sake of giving the Viaticum to the sick, and for the consolation of the faithful. And finally, a quite incontrovertible proof of this same truth is afforded by the practice of the Church on Good Friday of celebrating public divine service with the Host presanctified on Holy Thursday.

2

That is therefore the Catholic idea of the perpetual presence and the grounds on which it rests. But this truth does not occupy an isolated position in the summary of Catholic doctrine. The works of God are perfect through their connection, systematic arrangement, consistency, unity. All are in touch with one another, are incorporated into one another, grow and are developed by

[1] Conc. Trid. Sess. 13, c. 5.

degrees and slight additions. All fit into one another, preparing, elucidating, amplifying, developing. So it is also with the truth of the continual presence of the God-man in the holy Sacrament of the Altar.

Let us only first of all look back to the Old Covenant, which was essentially prophetic, a prelude and a "shadow of the good things to come" under the New Covenant.[1] One privilege and glory of the old Church was undoubtedly the personal intercourse, the speaking face to face which God deigned to vouchsafe to man. God communed with our first parents under the trees of the earthly Paradise; He went in and out of the tents of the patriarchs as a friend, and appeared to Abraham in the vale of Mambre; in the pillar of the cloud He accompanied the people of Israel through the desert, and in the halo of glory that enveloped the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle and in the temple on Moria, He, so to speak, located Himself permanently among His people, so that Moses could say to the people: "God hath been closely joined to thy fathers and loved them," [2] and: "there is not any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them." [3] Upon this grand substructure our Lord raised the fabric of His miraculous existence in the Eucharist, and if thereby He elevated the sacrificial cultus and the sacraments of the Old Covenant to a height and a perfection beyond all anticipation or conception, as a logical consequence He was bound also by

[1] Heb. x. 1. [2] Deut. x. 15. [3] *Ibid.* iv. 7.

the Eucharist to place the presence of God among His people on a higher footing than formerly. That He did in fact. Through the Eucharist the presence of God amongst us gained in every respect in permanence, extension and marvellous intimacy; God dwells among us actually and personally, He passes along our streets, He enters our houses. The fulness of time, which came in with the advent of Christ, has indeed also been revealed here to an extent great and amazing, outstripping all that could be contemplated or imagined.

Moreover a beautiful harmony exists between the perpetual eucharistic presence of the Divine Saviour and His life on earth and His mysteries; He unceasingly carries them on and completes them. The God-man came to our earth, not merely to accomplish His work here, but to be here and remain here. The Incarnation is described in Holy Scripture chiefly as a dwelling and tarrying among us: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"[1]; and: "I am with you all days even unto the consummation of the world."[2] Just as He, the eternal Word of the Father, delighted from all eternity to be with the children of men,[3] as He in His character of Infinite Wisdom bore within Himself, in the inexhaustible wealth of His divine nature, in His thoughts and designs of creation, all orders of created beings, and the images of all that might exist, and as we thus from all eternity dwell with Him and in Him,

[1] John i. 14. [2] Matt. xxviii. 20. [3] Prov. viii. 31.

for: "In him was life, and without him was made nothing that was made," so now also He wills continually to dwell amongst us and remain with us in His assumed human nature. Thus the Eucharist is not merely an extension and continuation of His activity, but also of His dwelling and abiding amongst us, and this by means of the perpetual sacramental presence. In Palestine of old the Saviour was only at one time in one place, and those who had need of help had often to journey far to find Him. Now He has discovered a means by the medium of the Blessed Sacrament to follow us everywhere, to locate Himself near to us in every place, to render Himself, in a word, ubiquitous. Even His former active ministry is mirrored in this continual presence, it is continued and perfected by its application. Who, when meditating on this silent, hidden sojourning in the tabernacle, is not involuntarily reminded of the quiet years of His childhood and hidden life in Bethlehem and Nazareth? Who, conscious that He passes unheard, unseen through our streets and highways, can fail to recognise the Good Shepherd, who never wearied of journeying from one end of the land to the other, blessing, consoling, healing, doing good? Who does not think of the delightful companionship with which the risen Saviour beguiled the way to the two disciples going to Emmaus? The Redeemer seems unable to forget His home on earth, or desist from the sweet custom of being with the children of men, of conferring benefits on them with His own

hand, of gladdening and brightening their life with the thousandfold blessings of His presence. Is He not ever the Good Shepherd, the faithful Guardian of mankind?

How great is the weight and importance attaching to the mystery of the Church through this continual presence of our Lord. Christ is not merely the Founder and Overseer of the Church. He is infinitely more to her than this, infinitely more important. He is her vital, energising principle. He will not be parted from her. He is her living Head, the actual Source and Giver of Life. She is not merely His bride, but His mystic body, and in a certain sense she is the ever-living Christ. Consequently He must be continually and personally in her. The Christ of history, who lived eighteen centuries ago, or who is only with her temporarily and occasionally, does not suffice for her nature and her mission. Only the continual sacramental presence corresponds adequately to the great mystery of the Church, in its depth, its fulness, its sublimity.

From this mysterious, yet true and substantial presence, the Church derives all her light, her power, her strength, all her grace and beauty; it is her invisible means of duration, the rock, the foundation whereon she rests. In this continual presence she possesses the ever-living, connecting link and centre of union not only for different localities and nations, but for earth and heaven. For both earth and heaven are really and actually united in Him who is the Head of the Church, in

the Monarch who rules over the twofold mystic kingdom, whose royal residence is both here and there. Our churches are therefore not merely houses of prayer and of preaching, but really and truly the abode of God, "the tabernacle of God with men."[1] And to our eucharistic tabernacle the words of the Apostle may be applied, when he says: "You are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels."[2] In the possession and enjoyment of this perpetual presence we emulate the denizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. The blessed possess the vision of God while we behold Him by faith; they face to face, we under the veils of the Eucharist. Through this continual presence our Church is truly the kingdom of God, heaven upon earth.

Finally, by this personal, uninterrupted dwelling amongst us our Lord meets all the needs, the aspirations of our nature. Man may make himself thoroughly at home on earth, he may surround himself with all the enjoyments, the possessions he covets, still there remains a void in his heart that refuses to be filled. God alone can fill that void. God is the first, the absolute necessity of man. Hence creatures are found to be unsatisfactory and insufficient, hence the mysterious impulse towards God. We need God, and He alone can satisfy our need. Therefore our soul seeks God, and seeks Him not merely as seen by faith, not merely as omnipresent in nature, not God in images and

[1] Apocalypse xxi. 3. [2] Heb. xii. 22.

parables, but in reality; not only in the life to come but in this present life. Nor as a pledge of future possession does anything content her but God Himself. She desires to have her God present, and to hold intercourse with Him. This is so true that this powerful yearning, if it fails to find the way of truth and reality, seeks a substitute, a compensation in a thousand vain, foolish, often pernicious inventions. Now our Redeemer provides for this yearning, this thirst of the soul after "the strong, living God,"[1] that makes itself felt so powerfully in every human heart, by His real and continual presence in our churches, and satisfies it as far as is possible in this earthly existence. The flickering lamp of the sanctuary shows us where God is actually to be found, it guides us to His feet. There He is, really and truly, only a few steps distant from us; He sees us and hears our whispered prayer, and the recollection, the repose, the peace, the happiness which descend upon our heart like a breath from heaven, tell us clearly enough that our aspirations are stilled. "The sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself."[2] "What have I in heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?" "Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever."[3] "This is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven."[4] Thus by His real and perpetual presence in the adorable Sacrament of the Altar our Lord answers all the

[1] Ps. xli. 3.
[2] *Ibid.* lxxxiii. 4.
[3] *Ibid.* lxxii. 25, 26.
[4] Gen. xxviii. 17.

longing of the human heart for God. Herein we see so truly revealed the essential beauty and heavenly consolation of our holy religion.

3

Thus the fact of the perpetual presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar radiates light and brightness everywhere, and finds, on the other hand, confirmation in other mysteries of the faith. But the blessed effects which it brings for us all are unspeakable.

In the first place, it confers honour on us and on our religion. St Thomas of Aquin begins his discourse on Corpus Christi, which forms part of the office for this feast, with the true and sublime thought that what really elevates man and a nation, and undoubtedly imparts honour and dignity to them, is God Himself, and the tokens of His gracious favour which He deigns to bestow on them. In fact, man is only great inasmuch as God makes him great, honours him and exalts him. God did certainly honour us above all by assuming our nature and dwelling amongst us. Now all, the Angelic Doctor continues, which God took from our nature He turns to account for our salvation, inasmuch as He gave His body and blood for us in the work of redemption, and offered it in sacrifice in the holy Sacrament of the Altar, to be besides the food of our souls and an eternal living and true memorial. Nay, more, what adds to the honour

conferred on us in this divine benefaction is the gracious, condescending, intimate manner in which He dispenses it to us. We see how in the holy Sacrament of the Altar He, as it were, forgets Himself, renounces Himself and, unconditionally, with unbounded trust remains near to us and gives Himself into our hands. Our Holy Church has indeed no reason to envy the earthly Paradise, the tents of Abraham, the gaily curtained tabernacle, or the golden temple on Mount Moria. We have God astonishingly near to us everywhere and always accessible to us. "He hath not done in like manner to every nation."[1] His nearness, the unbounded trust He reposes in us, His abasement for our sakes, are our exaltation and our honour.

In the second place His presence is our consolation. This life is justly called an exile and a pilgrimage. The way leads through a dry and barren land, which depresses our spirits and fatigues us; the thorns and thistles of the primeval curse spring up in luxuriant abundance beneath our steps; a scorching sun makes us feel everything a burden, and terrible tornadoes sweep through the desert. What a boon, what a godsend to the weary traveller is a shady rock, a kindly group of trees and a sure and loving guide well acquainted with the way! Now Jesus is all this to us through His perpetual presence with us, and the familiar intercourse we may hold with Him in all conditions and circumstances of our life. With Him beside us our life is like the journey of the children of Israel through

[1] Ps. cxlvii. 20.

the wilderness: He is the Rock whence water flows for us, the Pillar of the Cloud which goes before us, shading and sheltering us by day, enlightening us when night closes around us. He joins us on our way as He joined the Disciples who were going to Emmaus, speaking to us, consoling us, alleviating the fatigues of the road. Above all it is the dying who derive the most abundant consolation from His continual presence. What can one imagine more helpless, more desolate, more lonely, more terrible than a deathbed and the hour of death! But see, Christ comes and with Him a thousand graces, celestial light and divine consolation. He not only holds our drooping hand, He mitigates the terrors of the awful passage from time to eternity, and with a strong and sure hand guides our frail bark through the breakers that land us on the shore of eternity. "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me."[1] How many thousands this divine Steersman has brought safely to land! But how many fewer would have experienced this last and supreme consolation if our Lord were not ever watching beside us day and night. The eucharistic tabernacle, with the ever-burning sanctuary lamp, is the silent watch-tower where our Saviour keeps watch and unceasingly looks out for one who is struggling with wind and waves, in order to render him prompt assistance.

Finally, the perpetual presence contributes to beautify and enrich the life of the Church. Like all

[1] Ps. xxii. 4.

divine things the Eucharist contains an unsuspected plenitude of vitality and the germ of the most marvellous development and a wealth of glorious blessings. We have already seen that the Eucharist is at the same time a sacrifice and a sacrament, and not at any time was the act of worship absent at the accomplishment of the sacrifice or at the dispensing and reception of the sacrament. Yet apart from this twofold custom the worship of the holy Sacrament of the Altar had never been developed so as to form a separate and independent cultus, with special reference to the perpetual presence, until the thirteenth century. St Juliana of Liège, who had a special devotion to our divine Lord in the Eucharist, was the chosen instrument employed to spread the honour paid to the most holy Sacrament of the Altar. She repeatedly saw in a vision the Church under the emblem of a lovely moon, shining clear and bright, but on which there was one dark spot, whence no light came. It was revealed to her that the dark spot represented a gap in the cycle of ecclesiastial feasts, the absence of a festival peculiarly dedicated to the honour of the adorable Sacrament of the Altar.[1]

The institution of the Feast of Corpus Christi by Pope Urban IV. was the result of this supernatural communication, and in the course of time a number of devotions and public services were added, which now enrich our ecclesiastical life, and which all have for their principal object the adoration of our Lord in His presence on our altars.

[1] Bolland: Act. SS., 5 April.

We will briefly touch upon some of these devotions.

The first and most natural of these devotions in connection with the continual presence is what we term a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. In Catholic countries the churches are always open, inviting the passer-by to enter, and in towns especially the door is constantly opened and shut, if only to permit of a short visit, or even a passing act of adoration. It is in the calm evening hour when most worshippers are to be found there. These visits are a beautiful devotion; they are proof of a living faith, of steadfast conviction and certitude that Christ is really and unceasingly present in the Sacrament of the Altar. We only go to pay visits to our friends when we know them to be, or at least hope to find them, at home. Moreover these visits are a sign that the principles of faith are so deeply grounded that they are decisive for one's practical life and have become habitual. We consider visits to our friends, our relatives and our neighbours, as a social duty which our position or affection obliges us to fulfil. Now faith tells us: if our blessed Lord is truly in our midst, we are bound to visit Him. Thus the custom of paying friendly visits is applied to a supernatural relationship. Furthermore, these visits evince heartfelt love and intimacy. Hence they are not termed audiences or presentations, as when one is admitted to the presence of personages of high position, but visits, as between equals. And as ordinary visits are for the exchange of our thoughts, feelings, ideas, of our

hopes and apprehensions, our decisions and undertakings, our joys and griefs, so in these visits we approach our Lord as our Friend and Master with our sorrows, our cares, our work, our necessities, and find in Him counsel, consolation, encouragement, help in the toils and troubles of life. The visit of Nicodemus to the Saviour by night, the conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's Well, Magdalen sitting at Jesus' feet, obedient and loving, hoping and repentant, the confidential discourse and exhortations in the company of His Disciples apart from the multitude—these are all pleasing examples of what these visits are, and how much they do and effect! How great a power lies in this quiet time spent with the Saviour! We breathe a different atmosphere and are in a different environment. At the altar's foot we lay every burden of the day; our heart, with its anxieties and its fears, the constant ebb and flow of its passions, is tranquillised, we seem to have attained our end and goal. What a different aspect the difficulties and troubles of life assume; even the vicinity of the Eucharist affords us relief and light; sinful thoughts are stifled, bitter feelings are rendered kindly, grief is assuaged, good thoughts and actions are engendered. It has been truly said: "Devotion in the lonely chamber is doubtless good, quiet prayer at home is most consoling, sweet and pious. But the great and lofty ideas of Christian heroism are conceived, or rather inspired, before the altar, where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. There, rapt in silent prayer, the worldling in his heart renounces

the world and its vanities and vows fidelity to the divine Bridegroom; there the young Cleric, immersed in deep reflection, thinks of the triumphs won by the comrades of his youth, his schoolfellows, under the swords and red-hot pincers of Tongking, and mentally resolves to share with them the crown of martyrdom; there designs for the Church of God, which require persevering endurance, are formed and matured. There the heart is above all relieved of its daily burden of sin and sorrow, of anguish and care by an influx of emotions not experienced elsewhere; sacrifices seem light which everywhere else seem difficult, and the Catholic soon learns to understand and repeat words which suit no other spot so well: 'The sparrow hath found herself a house and the turtle a nest for herself . . . thy altars, O Lord of hosts, my king and my God.'"[1] We can add nothing to these most true words but: "Come and see,"[2] and learn by experience how profitable, how salutary is this pious custom, this devotion to our Lord in the Sacrament of the Altar. We pay visits to our fellow-men so frequently, so willingly, why do we not do so to the Saviour also, who is our best friend? Richly would He recompense us if sometimes we turned our steps to the place where He is to be found instead of to the houses of men.

Visits to the Blessed Sacrament are however merely a private devotion. There are also public ones, and amongst them Benediction is the principal, the service which enlivens and cheers the afternoon

[1] Ps. lxxxiii. 4. [2] John i. 46.

or evening of Sundays and holidays. The truly Catholic heart desires to have her Lord always with her, and without Him festive amusements have no charm. Thus the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is like the evening sacrifice, and while the holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the great, general, liturgical sacrifice, the audience-hour for great transactions between God, the Church, and all mankind, Benediction takes more the form of a service of praise and thanksgiving for the immense boon of His perpetual presence and an hour when each and all can lay before Him their own needs. The Good Shepherd enters into each division of His vast fold, counts his sheep and blesses them. How can the day be closed in a more sublime manner than with our Lord's benediction? Thus the Saviour once blessed the children whom their pious mothers brought to Him, so He lifted up His hands and blessed the Disciples for the last time on earth before His Ascension, and so when this world's day is ended He will give His benediction to His elect and admit them into His kingdom: "Come ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you."[1] How much unction there is in such a benediction! How many temptations and snares of evil spirits does it avert, how much success does it not add to our life both as regards temporal and spiritual concerns! What a truly Catholic spirit it sheds abroad! How touching a sight it is when, in seasons of public calamity or disaster, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, when

[1] Matt. xxv. 34.

the flock press round their shepherd, and their cry for help mounts up to the throne of God under the auspices of Him who is our great High Priest. How trustful and powerful the appeal made in His presence and under the shelter of His loving protection: "Behold, O God, our protector, and look upon the face of thy Christ."[1] Will not such a cry as this pierce the clouds and bring down help? On such occasions one is so fully conscious of the sweet consolation contained in the perpetual dwelling of Christ among us, how thereby He again makes Himself one with us, sharing in our gladness and in our sadness, taking part in our bright as in our dark days. He is not in our midst as the brazen serpent of old, as a symbol of faith and deliverance, but He is there really and truly, consoling, protecting, saving; and if special promises were attached to the ancient temple for seasons of public affliction and distress,[2] because it contained the sign and shadow of what we have in reality and truth, how much the more will the Lord God set His true tabernacle "for a shade in the daytime from the heat, and for a security and covert from the whirlwind and from rain."[3]

The Benediction service is evidently an imitation of the glory and honour paid to the Lamb in the circle of His elect, which St John beheld in Patmos.[4] There the worship is seen in heavenly perfection, and is of unceasing, never-ending duration; here only for the brief but happy space of a few hours

[1] Ps. lxxxiii. 10. [2] Par. vii. 12 *seq.*
[3] Is. iv. 6. [4] Apoc. iv. *seq.*

of this earthly existence. It is however the loving endeavour of the Church to model the earthly homage paid to the most holy Sacrament of the Altar on the pattern of the heavenly, and to give it the greatest possible extension in time and space, partly because the celestial service is the continual pattern of what the terrestrial should be, partly because this uninterrupted homage corresponds to the perpetual presence of our Lord. Consequently her ingenious love has expanded the Benediction service into the Forty Hours' Prayer, which since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has gradually become general. This idea suggested the foundation of an order with the special object of adoring the blessed Sacrament of the Altar without intermission by day and by night. The Forty Hours' Prayer and the Perpetual Adoration are faithful imitations of the heavenly adoration. Here as there is a shining throne,[1] upon which is a Lamb as it were slain; here as there golden lamps are burning, and as a bright rainbow innumerable tapers glow; here as there is a paradise of beauteous palms and flowers, here as there golden censers full of incense fill the sanctuary with a cloud of aromatic fragrance, here as there are the seats of the ancients who fall down and adore, here as there is a great multitude of all nations and peoples, here as there a loud Alleluia of thanksgiving and honour to the Lamb, the same worship, in fact, of the same Lord. And finally as there they rest not day or night in raising the canticle of praise, so here when in one

[1] Apoc. iv. 2, 5; v. 7, 8; vii. 9, 10.

church the tabernacle is closed, in another the pomp of the eucharistic service recommences. Thus the worship of the Blessed Sacrament forms a circle as day rises and sets in the Catholic world, and here, as there, the Lamb is the Sun that enlightens the holy city of God.[1] Earth catches a ray of heavenly light, and one is enabled to feel how sweet the Lord is, and how blessed His presence. How many whispered supplications from the lips of the multitude receive a gracious response, how many spiritual wounds are healed, how many secret blessings flow from Jesus' uplifted hands. Greater blessings accrue from the Prayer of the Forty Hours and the Perpetual Adoration than those granted to Obededom,[2] in whose house the Ark of the Lord abode three months. For: "I will fill this house with glory; saith the Lord of hosts, and in this place I will give peace."[3]

The highest culminating point of ecclesiastical worship and Catholic ceremonial is reached in the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. The Church in her holy joy in the possession of such a treasure, in the desire to see homage paid to it by all the world, and to bring the blessings of its presence within reach of the many, finds the stone walls of her earthly temples a space too circumscribed, and therefore issues forth into the open air, and makes the streets and squares, the meadows and woods, resound with hymns of exultant rejoicing in honour of the adorable sacrament. How infinite is the charity, the faith, the joy this procession

[1] Apoc. xxi. 23. [2] 2 Kings vi. 12. [3] Aggaus ii. 8, 11.

reveals; it is like the mystic stream Ezeckiel beheld issuing from the holy place,[1] flowing through the gate of the temple, and rising more and more until the waters formed a deep torrent, bringing life and healing wheresoever it came.

All that has been said applies particularly to the procession of Corpus Christi, the most magnificent of all on account of its universality and the preparations made to render it grand and noble. We cannot do better than quote the words of a recent and favourite writer to describe the beauty and the effect of the festival.[2] "Let us suppose it to be the Feast of Corpus Christi; we have risen with one glad thought uppermost in our minds. It gives a colour to everything around us, and brings sunshine to us even if the skies are dull. We must put before ourselves as on a map the aspect which the whole Church is presenting to the eye of God to-day. Oh, the joy of the immense glory the Church is sending up to God this hour, verily as if the world was all unfallen still. We think with delight of all the thousands of Masses which are being said or sung the whole world over, and all rising with one note of blissful acclamation from grateful creatures to the majesty of our eternal Creator. How many processions with the sun upon their banners are wending their way through the squares of mighty cities, through the flower-strewn streets of Christian villages, through the antique cloisters of the glorious cathedral or through the grounds of the devout

[1] Ezec. xlvii. 1. *seq.*

[2] Faber, "The Blessed Sacrament," Prologue, 1.

seminary. Upon how many altars of various architecture amid sweet flowers and starry lights, amid clouds of fragrant incense and the tumult of thrilling song, before thousands of prostrate worshippers, is the Blessed Sacrament raised for exposition or taken down for Benediction. How many blessed acts of faith and love, of triumph and reparation do not each of these things surely represent!"

What must not such a day accomplish? One single Feast of Corpus Christi "represents and reveals an interior world of deep worship, of countless supernatural operations of the Holy Ghost, and of the exuberant activity and inexhaustible energy of the Precious Blood. . . . Grace grows more active in us as great feasts draw nigh and their preludes bring many souls to the feet of their spiritual physicians. Crowds that were in sin yesterday now for the love of Jesus have made to-day's sun rise upon their penance, and over each one all heaven's angels rejoiced, more than over a newly created world. . . . There has been a vast and busy and populous empire of interior acts open to the eye of God to-day, so beautiful, so glorious, so religious, so acceptable to God, that the feast of the outer world has been the poorest possible expression of the inner feast of the world of spirit. What is it all but a triumph, the triumph of our hidden Lord?"

This is, therefore, the perpetual presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament apart from the sacrifice of the Mass and communion; here we see its importance and its connection with the faith and

the life of our Church, the benefits and blessings which it confers on us. This it is that imparts beauty and gladness to our earth, that is the life of our life.

And now what should be the result of what has been said? First and foremost heartfelt thanks to Almighty God, who in His love has given us all this; then joy and exultation in our religion, which is essentially a religion of blessing and consolation, and satisfies all the needs of our heart; finally, practical proof of our high esteem and appreciation of what this treasure is for our daily life, by making use of the benefits offered to us by our Lord's perpetual presence, and taking part in the devotions to the Blessed Sacrament.

We are bound to reverence and adore Christ wherever He is actually present. He is present here, as we know by faith. Moreover we are bound to offer special honour to Christ, when He reveals His presence and makes it known publicly. This is true in a special sense. The sacramental species belong essentially to the eucharistic Christ; in the Blessed Sacrament He has a real and substantial being; thus where it is exposed He appears under the eucharistic veil, and special tokens of veneration and devotion are due on our part. Thus the Church acts. If Christ Himself appeared visibly in person, she could not treat Him with more reverent respect than she now displays in regard to the adorable Sacrament of the Altar. Thirdly, we are bound to show Christ special honour and devotion there where He lavishes particular benefits

upon us. We have already set forth these benefits. How dreary and uninteresting our ecclesiastical life would be without the vivifying, enlivening cycle of sacramental devotions! How much joy and solace we should miss, especially in our last hour! The perpetual presence is in a word our very life. Finally, we are bound to honour and adore Christ particularly in places where His presence and His beneficent action meet with coldness and ingratitude. This is unhappily a sinister trait in human nature, and we will not enter upon it here. There is no one, not even the most saintly among us, who has not to make reparation for shortcomings and infidelities towards the God of Majesty and Love in the Blessed Sacrament. Wherefore let us do our utmost; for this the Festival of Corpus Christi has been instituted.

Let us therefore join in its celebration to the glory of our Lord and Saviour, and to the joy and happiness of our own heart. Life is dull and dreary and we have so little real joy. The everyday round of work, the pressure of earthly affairs, the importunities of daily life, the insatiable greed of temporal pursuits and endeavours, the inward void and desolation we experience, leave us no time for the enjoyment of true happiness. Yet we cannot live without happiness. Corpus Christi is the festival of gladness for all the world. God is our joy; the Church is our joy; heaven, faith, hope, charity the public confession of our belief, these constitute our joy, and all this we have in the august solemnity of the procession of Corpus Christi. It is the pro-

fession of the faith that glows within our hearts and shines upon our brow at the strains of the *Lauda Sion*, which resound throughout the world; it is the profession of our hope, we have a foretaste of heaven already upon earth, and in defiance of all our foes we go on our way to the eternal country; it is also the profession of our charity, We feel deeply and rejoice cordially that Christ is our own and that we belong to Him, and we desire all the world to perceive that He is our all-surpassing Treasure and our constant Protector.

V

ON THE VISITS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ROME

IT appertained to the illustrious acts which marked the reign of Pope Leo XIII., of happy memory, that he should in person proclaim and inaugurate the great Jubilee which closed the nineteenth and opened the twentieth century. With a trembling hand the aged Pontiff struck the first blow which was to commence the unwalling of the Porta Santa, the Holy Door. The gold hammer in his grasp was a votive offering of all the bishops of the Catholic world, and thus, as it were, symbolised the glad assent of the universal Church to the granting of the Jubilee Indulgence. Thus the supreme power of the head of the Church, and the fervent desire of all the children of the Church, opened the holy gate, on whose threshold penance and mercy, purity and peace meet together.

The Father of Christendom would not permit the departing century to sink into the silent grave of the past without depositing in its tomb the blessing of atonement, nor would he omit to lay in the cradle of the newly born century a pledge of heavenly benediction as a natal gift. Ancient Rome used to greet the dawn of a new century

with splendid games and the exuberant mirth of earthly rejoicing. Christian Rome does so with the celebration of the Jubilee.

An Universal Jubilee is always an important event in the life of the individual Christian, in the life of the Church, in the life of the whole of mankind. It is a serious invitation to enter into oneself; it is not merely a "peace conference," but a real treaty of peace between heaven and earth; it serves to elevate, invigorate and promote social order in the world by the work of penance, by the increase of the power exercised by prayer, and by the growth of good works acceptable to God. More especially the Jubilee, in expending the spiritual treasures of the Church, gives an impetus to the mystic intercourse between the Church Militant, suffering and triumphant, and as a singular, beneficent, practical proof of the primacy of the Holy See and the supreme ecclesiastical power of the Pope, it serves to strengthen Catholic unity, the reverence, affection and loyalty due to the Chair of Peter. A Jubilee is always a brilliant exhibition of the papal power; it is essentially a papal festival.

In Rome itself the Popes have invariably done their utmost for the purpose of furthering the exalted object of the Jubilee, and rendering the period of their sojourn in the capital of Christendom as profitable as possible for the spiritual advancement of the pious pilgrims who resort thither. In his Bull, Pope Leo XIII. recalls with regret the inspiring religious solemnities of which he himself was an eye-witness at the Jubilee of

Leo XII. First of all in these solemnities came public processions of penance and prayer, in which not unfrequently the Popes took part in person, and even on foot; then there was the exposition of the great relics in the various sanctuaries, and often the beatification or canonisation of some eminent servants of God, which had been postponed in order to add to the general edification and enhance the festal rejoicing. Thus a year of jubilee used to be one long, unbroken festival. The practice of making the round of the seven principal churches in Rome is one of the most ancient and customary usages of this festive time, as well as one of the favourite devotions of all devout pilgrims.

We will first say a few words concerning this pious and admirable practice, and then accompany in spirit the devout pilgrim on his way.

I

To visit the tombs of the holy Apostles and the spots hallowed by the blood of the holy martyrs was, even in the days of persecution, and pre-eminently since the time of Constantine the Great, a favourite and general custom amongst Christians. The habit of visiting the seven churches in particular we find mentioned in the seventh century by by St Begga, the mother of Pepin d'Heristal, and sister to the saintly Bishop Arnulf of Metz, and again in the fourteenth century (1350) by St Birgitta and her saintly daughter Catherine. The

custom gained in popularity more especially in the sixteenth century, through the example of several eminent saints, such as Cardinal Charles Borromeo, St Joseph Calasanctius, and even more through the influence of St Philip Neri (1552), who gave it a definite shape and sanction, and repeatedly made the round himself accompanied by more than a thousand persons. Not unfrequently cardinals and Popes walked at the head of these processions of suppliants. Pope St Pius V. attempted, when already stricken with a mortal malady, to make the pilgrimage once more, but he was unable to proceed farther than the Lateran, and expired a few days later, on the 1st May 1572. Since that period the practice has never lapsed into desuetude; on the contrary, Pius IX. confirmed it and attached to it a plenary indulgence, independently of the indulgences special to each individual church.

The seven churches in question are: St Peter's, the Lateran, Santa Maria Maggiore, St Paul and St Laurence *fuori le mure*, the Church of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem and St Sebastian. The five first-named of these churches, basilicas really, are called, in distinction from the earlier titular churches, papal or patriarchal churches, because they are supposed to represent in Rome the first great patriarchates of the Catholic world, and thus present a local symbol of Catholic unity and the subordination of the whole Church to the see of Rome.

Now in order to gain the plenary indulgence one must, after confession and communion, visit and

pray in each of the seven churches in the course of an ecclesiastical day. Such are the conditions for gaining the indulgence.

As time went on two methods of visiting these churches were drawn up, without however either being of obligation.

The first method is due to the Augustine monk Onophrius Panvinius.[1] This erudite antiquarian and historian leads the devout pilgrim to the different sanctuaries, including those that are on the way to the seven churches, imparting to him much instructive, edifying and entertaining information. He describes the churches, relates the historical events that took place there, gives the numbers of the altars and the reliquaries, and suggests to the pilgrim suitable prayers to be recited at the various notable spots in honour of the saints, for obtaining special virtues and for deliverance from sin and ills both of body and soul. The prayers consist chiefly of the antiphons of the Church, and liturgical formulas. The devotions are somewhat long, but full of unction and poetry. In fact some of the petitions exhale all the charm, the sweetness, the inspiration of the good old times as, *e.g.*, the prayer to the Holy Cross and to the Image of our Lord in the Lateran.

St Philip Neri is the author of the second method of visiting the seven churches; it is published under the title: *Le visite delle sette Chiese principali di Roma secondo il metodo di S. F. Neri. Roma*, 1866. This guide is shorter and more popular, not com-

[1] Le sette Chiese principali di Roma. Roma, 1570.

piled so much from liturgical prayers as from well-known and familiar forms of prayer and Latin and Italian hymns. The arrangement of the prayers is interrupted by meditations on the different ways our Lord traversed and the occasions when His blood was shed during His Passion. Much emphasis and prominence is given to the objects of this visit to the churches: penance, remission of sin and its punishment, thanksgiving for benefits received, intercession for all ranks and orders in the Church, the conversion of heretics and unbelievers, and assistance for the suffering souls in purgatory. The first guide presents the spiritual life under a cheerful and pleasing aspect; in the latter a graver view of it is given. At any rate the prayer for the chief needs of the Church, prescribed for gaining the plenary indulgence, and as for the sake of example it is formulated in the Litany of All the Saints, is most suitable to the circumstances of a visit to the seven churches.

In the good old times these visits to the churches were public and general as a procession, preceded by a cross-bearer, the confraternities who joined in it wearing their distinctive habit and all singing hymns and canticles as they went. A Brother or Master of the Guild had command of the procession which started from one of the churches in the morning, and ended in another in the evening, when a *Te Deum* was sung. A cart followed to receive those pilgrims who fell out of the ranks, overcome by fatigue and exhaustion. At midday a halt was made in a shady wood, or in the cool

portico of a sanctuary; a spiritual lection was then read, while a simple repast was taken. After this interval of rest the remainder of the way was traversed. The band of devout pilgrims, walking in orderly ranks and wearing the bright-coloured dress of their confraternity, at one time engaged in silent prayer, at another raising their voices in singing psalms, now passing along the quiet roads that led through the vineyards and gardens of the Campagna, or in the shade of the grey towers and time-honoured walls of the Eternal City, or again wending their way under the arches of long lines of ancient aqueducts, or through the lonely churches dedicated to the martyrs without the walls, was an edifying and touching sight, reminding the spectator forcibly of the Church, who throughout centuries trod the hard road of penance, of prayer, and of conflict, beguiling her earthly woes and sustaining her hope by singing songs of the heavenly country towards which she was journeying.

These pilgrimages found so much favour with foreigners visiting Rome, and awakened in their hearts after their return to their own country so great a longing for the happy days and the season of grace enjoyed in Rome, that an attempt was made to introduce and adopt this pious custom in their northern homes. Thus in many towns, such as Bologna, Le Mans, Angers, Beauvais, etc., imitations of the seven churches were erected, where either in seven separate chapels, or at the same number of altars in one single church, rich indulgences might be gained.

2

THE VISITS TO THE CHURCHES BEGIN

ST PETER'S

It was late in the afternoon of Easter Monday. The deep tones of the great bell of St Peter's sounded over the wide square, announcing to the numerous visitors in gala dress present in St Peter's that the festive joy of Easter was not yet ended. We entered the basilica as the first station of our pilgrimage.

Who can find words to extol St Peter's, whether the old building or the new; the marvellous effect of its vast expanse, the rotundity, the perfect symmetry and harmony of its parts? The massive pillars, blocks, it would seem, hewn from the quarry of the universe, rise up, as if in obedience to a magic wand, with ease and grace, to form arches and circles which only the genius of a Bramante or Michael Angelo could conceive and design. The curves and arches, so variously intermingled, which span those immense spaces and immeasurable heights and meet in such harmonious junction, produce in the beholder who gazes on them long and fixedly the magic spell of an agreeable, dreamy sensation, confusing all calculation of space or measurement of dimensions, while the whole is flooded with light from the glorious dome, a masterwork in height, beauty of form, boldness of design and richness of decoration. This is the work of the Renaissance, which raised its grand arches and wound its wreaths above the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles, after the ancient,

venerable basilica had been somewhat ruthlessly demolished and levelled with the ground.

St Peter's is the largest interior in the world, and the glorious tomb of the Prince of the Apostles, who was laid here to rest and thereby became the visible corner-stone of Catholic unity, the invisible vital point of contact between heaven and earth, who was the founder of a second Roman world-wide empire, to which an endless duration is assured. The aesthetical, historical and religious points of view are here combined to form the greatest of all ideals, and are borne in upon the mind of the spectator with irresistible force. And while beneath our feet in the subterranean vault and colossal crypts of St Peter's the first supreme head of the Church lies buried in the dust, together with countless of his successors in the hierarchical supremacy, in the very shadow of his tomb the living bearers of his authority carry it on from age to age continuously until time shall be no more. Here indeed the saying is eternally proved true: Peter is dead; long live Peter!

This overpowering impression takes possession of the soul at every visit to St Peter's, which today appears to have assumed dimensions of even greater immensity and grandeur, owing to the presence of the crowd of pilgrims come to celebrate the feast, and to the shades of evening that begin to spread the veil of twilight over all the details of gold and colour. We hasten past massive pillars, chapels, monuments of popes and princes, to the

Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, where naturally our first homage is due. Here is present the One who ever lives among the dead around, the unseen power who founded, built, and now continually maintains and upholds that Church, of which the material structure of St Peter's, gigantic as are its proportions, is but a faint image; here dwells the mysterious Spirit who animates all, and inspires the great deeds of wisdom, strength and sanctity commemorated in the adjacent chapels. For all this a tribute of praise and thanksgiving must be offered here. Our supplications also, presented here, will gain potency and the grace of a favourable hearing. As we proceed farther we pause a moment to utter a brief salutation, and to kiss the feet of the bronze statue of St Peter in the nave of the basilica; then we kneel at the tomb of the Prince of Apostles. We behold where he lies below in a recess of no great depth, in which costly marbles and gold decorations reflect a magic gleam, and the edge of which is surrounded by a row of golden lamps continually burning. Above the tomb the dome rises to a great height, on the frieze beneath which is seen in the roseate light of the setting sun this inscription gleaming in letters of mosaic on a gold ground: *Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam*; this resting place of the Apostle forms the centre of the four gigantic arms of the sacred edifice, which stretch out so mightily as if to reach to the ends of the earth. Who can fail to be reminded of the beams of the cross whereon

Peter, when dying, extended his arms as if to achieve the conquest of the world.

How fervently and confidently the prayer for the preservation and exaltation of the Church ascends from the heart here where the assurance of her invincibility and eternal duration, given in the divine utterance, *Non praevalebunt*, shines above in the dome, telling us that here more than anywhere else our prayers are certain to be heard; here where close by three Apostles are interred, besides more than twenty-three saintly popes and countless high ecclesiastical dignitaries and princes of the Church; here, too, where so many holy founders of orders and apostolic missionaries have prayed, and whence they have gone forth, fortified with strength from on high, to propagate the faith and extend Christ's kingdom. Truly where else can one pray so well for the exaltation of the Catholic Church, not indeed for the object of attaining secular dominion and through the help of carnal weapons, for far were such thoughts from the Founder of the Church and her first holy popes, but for the glory of God, who in the Catholic Church alone is rightly worshipped and adored, and out of love for man, for whom in her fold alone true rest and happiness for time and for eternity is to be found? How fervently we pray here for the extirpation of heresy and schism, in sight of the Chair of Peter, upheld by the four great doctors of the Eastern Church, which gleams golden from a distant corner of the choir; here, not far from the tombs of St Gregory Nazianzen, of

Chrysostom, of Athanasius, these scourges of the various heresies, fatal offspring of self-will, pride and sensuality, instruments of hell for the devastation of the Church and the ruin of souls. Sorrowfully our thoughts wander to our native land in a northern clime, which unhappily a teacher of false doctrine succeeded in severing from the maternal bosom of the Church. Yet, thanks be to God, there are for our consolation not a few noble-minded individuals who, through divine grace, from enemies and persecutors have become loyal children of the Church and, laying down their arms before the truth, have preferred a grave in the shadow of St Peter's to the glitter of a throne. The mortal remains of the Swedish Queen Christina and of the last three Stuarts are laid in St Peter's. Beside the tomb of St Peter, erected and decorated by the first Christian emperor, beside this same crypt, the idea of a Christian state was realised, the idea of the Holy Roman Empire. Here the first imperial throne was blessed, the first imperial sword, the first sceptre and the first imperial orb were dedicated, in order that the two highest powers in the world in union and concord and united action might guide the nations to the attainment of their final and eternal goal. How many emperors were crowned by the hand of the Pope! Of those who received their crown beside the tomb of the Apostle, many strove zealously to fulfil their sacred and lofty task, while others degraded the noble ideal to a sad scene of contention, to the misfortune of the Church and the

nations. Before the sepulchre of the Apostle, not far distant from it, is the memorable block of porphyry, from which the successors of St Peter up to quite recent times were accustomed reluctantly to fulminate interdicts and excommunications on account of the crimes of emperors and princes. All this of which we speak certainly acts as a powerful stimulus to pray for the maintenance of peace and concord among Christian princes and nations, in whose hands rest blessings or curses for the whole of Christendom. God grant that they may recognise that the power is not given them for the gratification of their own desires, but for the welfare of their subjects and the administration of justice not only towards the people but also towards the Church, who is their most potent protector and ally. The sceptre of the monarch ought to be a gentle pastoral staff, not a rod wherewith to strike his best friend.

We were suddenly roused from these grave reflections by the silvery tones of a small bell, and at the same time a general movement on the part of the devout worshippers at the shrine of the Apostle towards the farthest pillar beneath the dome, apprised us that a spectacle of a different kind awaited us. Above us, on the balcony of the pillar, then hung with drapery, lights were seen gleaming, and a priest attended by acolytes appeared there. He held up several glittering reliquaries, proclaiming to the people in a loud voice what were the relics contained in them, while the crowd below listened in hushed and devout silence, and with

bowed heads venerated the sacred relics. This was the exhibition of the major relics of St Peter's, which takes place several times a year on high festivals. The principal among the relics are: the holy lance, St Veronica's veil, a portion of the Holy Cross and the head of St Andrew. Answering to these relics, statues of St Longinus, of St Veronica, of St Helena and St Andrew stand in lofty niches in the four pillars respectively which support the dome. So this ceremony may be regarded as a touching benediction at the close of the days of Easter.

Meanwhile the last rays of the setting sun are fading fast from the golden cupola, and the lengthening shadows in the side aisles warn us that it is time to depart. Stepping out of the vestibule of St Peter's we find ourselves standing at the top of the long flight of steps, looking over the incomparably beautiful piazza. The evening is one of those Italian evenings of almost heavenly loveliness and glory, when everything seems transfigured in the soft purple twilight and an indescribable feeling of calm and felicity sinks into the soul of the onlooker, and thoughts of heaven are borne in upon him as he watches the light cloudlets tinged with gold that fleck the evening sky. Down below lies the piazza in solemn majesty, encircled by the magnificent porticoes and colonnades of choice travertine; farther away bounded on the right by the first buildings on the Janiculum, on the left by the lofty papal palace, while in the midst the distant view is shut off by the ancient walls of the Castle Sant' Angelo. This

scene is, perhaps, the finest which modern Rome can offer to compare with the splendour, the grandeur, the majesty of ancient Rome. One is always deeply affected at the sight of these memorable spots, especially when a vast multitude in festal attire is passing through them, and when in thought the mind recurs to the past; here, three centuries ago, stood the wide atrium in front of Old St Peter's, with the monumental fountain playing in the centre, the long lines of porticoes and colonnades and the princely palaces, the residence of popes and the temporary abode of royal pilgrims. From the basilica ancient porticoes used to form a straight covered way to the Aelian bridge. This was the stage on which were enacted dramas glorious, consoling, but also disgraceful, of which the ecclesiastical history of the first Christian centuries and of the Middle Ages bears record. Looking back to yet earlier times, the Via Cornelia, bordered with sepulchral monuments, passed over the spot which is now the piazza of St Peter's, and to the right of the road rose the high, long walls of the Circus, on the *spina* of which stood the obelisk which now adorns the square of St Peter's. That obelisk of old looked over the innumerable tiers of seats away to the pleasure grounds of Agrippina and Domitian, with their groves, villas, baths, and the Temple of Apollo; it beheld at its base Nero acting as charioteer, urging his horses in their furious course round the racecourse; or again it beheld the early Christians sewn up in skins, soaked with pitch, living torches illumining the night with a ghastly, horrible light

at the pagan games; and at the foot of that same obelisk which now towers in front of his great church, St Peter was crucified. Over the Apostle's sacred remains, interred in the Via Cornelia, a humble monument was erected above ground. Of all the sinful, ostentatious splendour of the pagans nothing remains but this single obelisk. The modest sepulchre of the poor fisherman has gradually been enlarged until it has become a grand basilica, a shrine of world-wide fame, beside which the mausoleums of Hadrian and Augustus shrink into insignificance, and to which the largest of the imperial basilicas and the Forum might serve as side-buildings, the Pantheon, the biggest of all the rotundas, as a cupola. The huge old obelisk, a silent witness of Christianity's baptism of blood, the only one of the obelisks which remained standing erect when Rome fell, was for the second time removed from its place to act as a guard of honour at Peter's tomb, and to proclaim by the inscription in Latin characters on its base, to every succeeding generation as it comes and goes, that Christ has conquered, that Christ rules. The Capitol and the Palatine are no longer the vital centre of the universal empire, but St Peter's and the Vatican. Without them neither Italy nor the world at large would have a right judgment or appreciate the immense importance of the Faith.

SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE

In order to complete one's visits to all the other churches in a single forenoon, it is necessary to set

out on the way at a very early hour. One must rise in good time, with the April sun of Rome.

We direct our steps towards S. Maria Maggiore. Rome, the great city, is still asleep; only a few workmen are to be seen in the streets, and beggars going to take their stand betimes in the accustomed places. At the corners where the streets cross, numerous herds of black goats lie chewing the cud; they come from the Campagna, and a glass of their milk is offered to those who like it for a few bajocchi. Stillness also prevails in the large church where our first visit is to be paid; its vast nave is all but empty save for some scattered worshippers kneeling at the various altars, and thus we experience quite a childish pleasure in obtaining as it were the first and freshest blessing of the sanctuary.

Santa Maria Maggiore is a handsome, venerable edifice, one of the largest of Christian churches and one of the few ancient basilicas within the city which were not despoiled of their distinctive characteristics by the Renaissance fever. The majestic forest of Ionic pillars of white Parian marble form long lines on each side of the nave, interrupted only by the projecting arches of the two large side-chapels before the choir. The architrave, profusely decorated with mosaics, runs in horizontal lines above the classic capitals of the columns, above that is a series of representations in mosaic on a gold background, then a row of arched windows, finally over all the richly gilded and decorated wooden coffered ceiling, until the majestic arch of the chancel is reached, in the space above which is

a series of mosaics. Behind it widens out a spacious apse gleaming with gold and colour, a worthy termination to the grand structure, which presents the simplest form of a basilica without transepts. The long rows of white pillars spanned by broad arches, the bright colours of the decoration, seen in the subdued light that pervades the sanctuary, produce the most agreeable and soothing effect on the eye and on the mind. S. Maria Maggiore takes a place in the first rank of the basilicas, as being a splendid monument of the ancient Roman architecture, and also for its antiquity; it has been for long centuries hallowed and, so to speak, impregnated by the devout prayers and pious aspirations of the Christian world. There one can truly enjoy the tranquillity and calm of prayer. Externally the edifice has nothing to boast; the fine old façade has disappeared and given place to a new frontage, more suitable for a palace than for a church. The campanile, however, is one of the finest in Rome.

The erection of the church was commenced and completed by Pope Tiberius about 360. Sixtus III. enlarged and almost rebuilt it about 432, and dedicated it to the Mother of God. He adorned it with magnificent mosaics as a memorial of the triumph of the faith over the Nestorian heresy at the Council of Ephesus, when the title of Theokotus—*i.e.* Mother of God—was solemnly given to Mary. This circumstance, as well as some relics, and a pictorial representation or an imitation of the holy crib in which our Saviour was laid, dating from the twelfth century, render this church in an exceptional manner a

sanctuary of our Lady, as it is the most beautiful and celebrated church of the Mother of God in the whole Christian world.

Here then we feel thoroughly at home with the blessed Mother of God, and can with full confidence lay before her all our necessities. All around us speaks of Mary: first of all the ancient mosaics in the nave, some of them 1500 years old, over the chancel arch and in the choir, representing mysteries out of the life of our Lady and especially emphasising her dignity as Mother of God. In the recess of the choir there is a large picture of the coronation of Mary, surrounded by an aureola of stars on a blue ground, which gives the dominant tone to the whole building and forcibly suggests the leading idea. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the large Sistine Chapel on the right, exactly over the representation of the crib, which Sixtus V. had transferred to this place—thus bringing into juxtaposition the two principal mysteries of the Redeemer, His birth and the eucharistic presence, in natural and pleasing association with the mystery of the maternity of Mary. In the large, elaborately decorated chapel to the left the miraculous portrait of the Mother of God ascribed to St Luke is venerated. Around the picture a whole collection of works of art, statues, paintings, the sentences of the Doctors of the Church illustrate and relate the glorious story of the victory of the Mother of God over heresy. All attacks on Christ and His Church are aimed directly or indirectly at Mary. Her virginity and her dignity as Mother of God are, as it

were, a mighty shield wherewith she defends the treasure of the faith and continually vanquishes all heresies. How often since the troublous times of Gregory the Great has Rome had recourse to St Luke's miraculous picture and found help in seasons of temporal calamity and distress. Would that the Mother of God would display and give practical proof to Christendom of the power she has long possessed, by sweeping from the face of the earth the sad remains of unbelief and heresy, and introducing a period of peace and happiness.

The sacred associations which abound in this sanctuary form a stimulus to our devotion. Although the exact spot is not indicated, it is known for certain that the mortal remains of the great St Jerome, that doughty champion of the Church and of the honour of our Blessed Lady, rest within the shade of these walls. Two or three times he visited the spot where the childhood of our Lord was spent, and he desired ultimately to be laid in the church dedicated to His Holy Mother. His altar is in the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. Opposite to the monument of the energetic Pope Sixtus V. is the tomb of Pope Pius V., the saintly reformer of abuses. The names of St Philip Neri, St Charles Borromeo, and of St Ignatius of Loyola, who said his first Mass here, seem still to faintly echo through the precincts of this building, in which they loved to pray. Outside the church stands a simple cross, a memorial of Henry IV.'s abjuration of Calvinism, whereby internal peace and the free exercise of the Catholic

faith was secured to France. All these things act as a powerful incentive to our zeal in praying for the needs of the Church.

We pass out of this sanctuary of the Mother of God with the same emotion of almost filial happiness that we experienced on entering it. One feels so thoroughly at home there. It is said that a wealthy Roman patrician named John and his wife, being childless, determined to make the Mother of God heiress to their large property. That was a beautiful and truly Catholic idea. After God, Mary is our nearest relative, our spiritual mother. Thus the basilica was built at the expense of the pious couple, in commemoration of a miraculous fall of snow (according to the legend) which covered this spot of ground and no other in the heat of summer (5th August), when our blessed Lady appearing both to Pope Tiberius and to John and his wife, showed them that she had appropriated in this way the site of a new temple to be erected in her honour and for the benefit of the people of God. Pope Tiberius accepted the gift of the pious couple, and Pope Sixtus consecrated it, as we learn from the inscription over the chancel arch: *Sixtus episcopus plebi Dei.* In remembrance of this legend every year on the Feast of our Lady *ad nives*, during High Mass showers of white rose leaves are allowed to fall from the gilded roof, forming a leafy mist between priest and worshippers. This custom is also emblematic of the innumerable favours and gracious answers which the Mother of God bestows on her children who visit her there. Does she not

recompense a hundredfold every little attention that is paid her?

On passing through the vestibule we notice that there, as in St Peter's, there is a "holy door," opened in the Jubilee Year. Within on the arch above, on either side of the monogram of Christ, a cock and a dove are represented, symbols respectively of penance and innocence. They have been there for centuries as a permanent reminder that only to penance or innocence is the gate of salvation opened. This has special reference to the time of Jubilee.

ST LAURENCE OUTSIDE THE WALLS

Passing over what was once the *Forum Esquilinum*, by the monumental ancient fountain (called the Trophies of Marius), the ruins of which are so picturesque a feature of the palm-planted piazza Vittore Emmanuele, then under the one single arch left standing of what was formerly the *Aqua Alexandrina*, across the *Forum Tauri*, where on one side the Church of St Bibiana stands, on the other the *Nymphaeum Alexandrinum* with its high-vaulted, half-ruined cupola, we enter behind the old *Porta Tiburtina*, alongside the Aurelian wall, into the straight road leading to St Laurence, the third station of our ecclesiastical pilgrimage.

At the end of a rather sloping road, buildings of a somewhat unfamiliar description appear, colossal statues between great open gateways enclosed by high walls in strict Egyptian architecture, a forest of

dark cypresses being visible above the parapets. Behind this gloomy frontage the first rays of the sun, slowly dispelling the early morning mists of the Sabine mountains, created a background of mingled light and shade, and lent to the scene a mysterious charm. This is the great, wide cemetery of Rome. We leave it in deep shadow on the right, and turning round a corner enter the square before the Church of St Laurence, which is situated beside the cemetery.

There the church stands, in simple, quiet beauty, its façade, ornamented with mosaics, projecting both in front and at the sides, the porch supported with fine old pillars and decorated with coloured representations of incidents in the life of St Laurence, as well as of later happenings of which this church was the scene. The first glance at the interior of the ancient basilica is singularly impressive; the long rows of dark granite columns of the nave with Ionic capitals, above them on the flat spaces of the clerestory pictorial representations illustrative of the lives of the two holy deacons, the narrow windows, the beautifully painted openwork of the roof, and behind the Altar of the Confessio the vast choir, with noble columns rising from below, antique friezes and entablature of ancient sculpture; all, even the minor accessories, the pavement inlaid with mosaic, the bishop's throne, the baldachino over the high altar and the two ambones in the nave, these all are specimens of the noble, most correct work of the style in which the ancient basilicas were built.

The plan of St Laurence is very peculiar, it is

actually composed of two churches. St Cyriaca interred St Laurence here on her estate, the *Ager Veranus*, and Constantine built a basilica over the grave, which Pelagius II. enlarged and embellished in the sixth century. This remains as the hinder part of the church, and now constitutes the choir and the crypt. But a portion of the fifth-century church still remained, the apse of the Pelagian structure being back to back with the apse of the other. Honorius III. (1220) constructed the basilica as we now see it by uniting the two churches; the whole was made to open towards the west; the Pelagian apse was partly demolished and the present choir built up, the walls and floor being raised. Pius IX., however, caused the space to be cleared, thus gaining the crypt as it is at present, the front part of which is occupied by the common tomb of SS. Laurence and Stephen, while the hindermost part is the sepulchre where the remains of Pius IX. are interred. Beside Pope Pius IX. four other popes as well as SS. Hippolytus and Justinus rest in the hallowed precincts of the *Ager Veranus*. The body of St Stephen was brought from Constantinople in 557, during the reign of Pelagius I., and deposited by the side of St Laurence.

Most forcible are the accents in which these saints speak to the heart of the Catholic of the power and majesty of the Church. Every rank, order and degree of her hierarchy, from the lowest to the highest, from the deacon to the Pope, all the avocations and activities of each, from the service of the temporal government to

the exercise of the supreme official authority, the erudition of the teaching Church, the martyrdom of the first confessors who shed their blood for the faith down to the no less courageous though unbloody confession of Pius IX., all these are represented here in the persons of those who filled them most worthily, defended them most bravely, sacrificed themselves for them most unsparingly. The persecution under the Emperor Valerian, to which St Laurence and Sixtus, the Pope whom he served, fell victims, was with malice aforethought directed primarily against the hierarchy on account of its supposed wealth and on account of the power and respect it enjoyed. The right, till then acknowledged by the law, of possessing common places of burial and holding assemblies in them was withdrawn, a disregard of this prohibition being punishable with death. This was the occasion of Pope Sixtus being beheaded in the catacomb of Praetestatus; three days later his deacon Laurence followed him to a martyr's death.

It is therefore a very appropriate place, and one may look for a rich reward of our pains if we pray very specially in this church for our ecclesiastical superiors. God grant that in conflict with the opposition and persecution of the world they may ever prove equal to their high and responsible position. That constitutes the real and most glorious exaltation of the Church. According as her hierarchy bear her up, she rises or sinks, advances or recedes. The brightest periods upon

which the Church can look back are invariably those in which her hierarchy proved itself worthy of its high calling, just as the darkest are those in which the hierarchy fell short of the performance of its lofty duties. Thus it is by God's ordinance that the Church rests upon and is supported by her hierarchy. The saints will doubtless gladly unite their powerful intercession to ours for this sublime end; saints who, like Stephen and Laurence, devoted their youth, their hopes, their lives even to the Church at a time when bloody edicts were issued against them, and who crowned their zeal and fidelity in her service by such heroic courage amid the most excruciating tortures as to awaken the astonishment and admiration of both judges and executioners. Here also the power of the Church is gloriously revealed, which is capable of endowing, of animating her ministers, weak, frail men, with such superhuman strength. And how she loves to honour her immortal champions even here below, may be seen in St Laurence's Church. As Stephen is venerated in the East, so is Laurence in the West; in Rome alone no less than twenty altars are raised in his honour. And what shall we say about our beloved Pius IX.? He desired the simplest possible monument to mark his resting-place, and he had it. It stands behind the tomb of St Laurence, and is touching in its simplicity, just as he would have had it. But the gratitude and affection of the Church for her "good Shepherd" has raised around it a sepulchral

chapel of such rare magnificence and splendour, as to surpass that of any previous one of the successors of St Peter. In fact such is its rich beauty, that some are inclined to think the mausoleum of Pius IX. is over-ornamented for a funeral vault. An inscription on a gold background runs all round the chapel under the cornice: *Virtutum suarum splendore apostolicam sedem illustravit; universam Ecclesiam amore et admiratione sui implevit; pro veritate et justitia invicto semper animo certavit; magnis laboribus in christiana republica administranda est in exemplum defunctus.* These words contain a splendid tribute not only to the memory of Pius IX. but to the whole hierarchy.

St Hippolytus must also be remembered here, for at one time a famous basilica was raised over his tomb. He was a pupil of St Irenaeus, a philosopher and ecclesiastical writer, but later on he lapsed into error. Pope Pontianus, whose exile in Sardinia he shared, induced him to retract and be reconciled to the Church, and he met with a martyr's death during the persecution under Maximin. When led out to execution—tradition relates—he loudly bewailed his devious step, and exhorted all his friends and followers to return to the unity of the Church. He is the only one of the Church's heroes to whom a statue was erected in the first centuries; it is now to be seen in the Lateran. This serves as a forcible reminder to prayer for our separated brethren, that they may return to the faith of their forefathers.

St Laurence is in a peaceful, solemn spot surrounded by ancient Christian tombs and by the new cemetery that shuts it in on three sides. This cemetery, with its high walls, through the big arched openings in which a view is obtained of the sepulchral monuments and the dark tops of the cypresses, with its long terraces and low, shady walks, filled with handsome marble chapels and the humble crosses of the poorer classes, stretches out far on all sides into the Campagna. The kingdom of the departed seems to encroach more and more in extent on the domain of the living. Since the first centuries of the Christian era countless generations have been laid to rest beside one another without distinction, and all here await the day of resurrection. The last services for the living and the dead are rendered silently and unostentatiously by the good Capuchins who inhabit a monastery hard by, where there is an antique, picturesque Way of the Cross. These worthy monks bury all Rome, the rich and the poor, seculars and ecclesiastics. St Laurence is essentially a churchyard and cemetery, therefore our departed brethren may surely claim the charity of a few prayers, a small alms on our part ere we leave the spot.

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS OF JERUSALEM

Proceeding along a country road through gardens and vineyards, round the old towers and walls of

the Aurelian fortification of the city, we reach the Porta Maggiore, formerly called Porta Labicana. It is a thoroughly Roman picturesque gateway, whose three high arches, ornamented with pillars, serve as a point of support and of meeting to five ancient aqueducts which cross at this spot. Behind the gate on the left is an arch of the old *Aqua Claudia*, which branched off here in the direction of the Caelian and the Palatine; this leads us into the immediate vicinity of the Church of the Holy Cross at Jerusalem.

The site of this church is a very lonely and deserted one. Casting a hasty glance through the gates standing wide open in the walls that border the road to right and left, we see only silent out-standing market-gardens, among whose vegetable produce fragments of ancient masonry, and structural remnants of former magnificence, now overgrown with ivy and wild vine, offer here and there a melancholy spectacle, amongst others the high arches of a Nymphaeum before the summer palace once inhabited by Alexander Severus and wherein after him Gallienus led a life of luxury while the empire everywhere went to wreck and ruin. Where the Basilica of the Holy Cross now stands was once the Sessorian Palace, which Constantine placed at the disposal of his mother Helena for her residence, and which she transformed into a church in honour of the relics of the true Cross that she brought from Palestine. From this part Rome is entirely lost to view. Only a few tall cypresses and rows of trees mark the way into the town,

and only now and again is the perfect stillness broken by the bell of some convent, or of a little church not far off. The stern, silent Campagna makes bold inroads here on the domain of the township.

The old, venerable basilica of Constantine's time was deserted and fell into almost complete ruin during the sojourn of the popes at Avignon; it was rebuilt by Urban V. and again restored and altered, unfortunately in very bad taste, by Benedict XIV., who destroyed the old façade and portico, substituting for them an oval vestibule and new façade. In the latter there is scarcely a single straight line, all is curved, wreathed and twisted. The vestibule is surmounted by a cupola, in the interior are four handsome pillars, vestiges of the ancient building. Three only of the five aisles which formerly composed the interior of the basilica now remain, and of the twelve red and grey granite columns of the nave only eight are visible, the others having been encased in masonry by Benedict XIV. to afford greater strength to the new roof. All these changes, and the whitewashed, unadorned expanse of the walls, give the impression of a modern and very poor specimen of the Renaissance style. The only thing that is beautiful and majestic, commanding our admiration, is the wide apse behind the high altar, with its stately, overarching columns. Above the high altar is a baldachino resting on four pillars; beneath it is a fine urn of porphyry containing relics. The decoration of the apse consists in a fresco painting, representing in the centre St Helena

with the true Cross; on the left the Invention of the Cross, on the right the Exaltation of the Cross are depicted, and above all on an azure background Christ is seen enthroned, surrounded by the evangelists. The paintings are of the school of Pinturicchio, and although defaced by the hand of an unskilful restorer, they are pleasing and devotional, suggestive of a solitary flower growing in a deserted waste place. At the end of the right aisle there is a tribune for the exhibition of the greater relics: a portion of the true Cross, the title of the Cross, one of the nails, and a spike out of the crown of thorns. The chapel in which the relics are usually kept is in the interior of the adjoining convent, and can only be reached by a labyrinth of flights of stairs and corridors. On the right and left of the apse steps lead down into the crypt, to the chapel dedicated to St Helena, the ground of which is said to be composed of earth brought from Mount Calvary. The roof is decorated with mosaics of a very ancient date. Since the time of Pius IV. the guardianship of the sanctuary is entrusted to the sons of St Bernard. They are, however, obliged to accommodate soldiers in their dwelling. Among all the alterations, interior and exterior, which this building has undergone, only the original weather-beaten tower remains standing; one may fancy it looks down with vexation and regret at the disfigurement by modern decorations of the ancient sanctuary.

Here also everything seems to remind one of the weakness and the triumph of the Cross. This

Church of the Holy Cross is in a certain sense symbolical of Mount Calvary. As there in times long past the Church of the Holy Sepulchre crushed and did away with the abominations of the altar of the pagan Venus, so here the mystery of the Cross with its sanctity, its supernatural power, its infinite blessings purified the spot which was the scene of imperial barbarities and excesses. It was a matter of immense consequence to hell and its confederates on earth to hide for ever from sight, to get rid altogether, of the true Cross of Christ, the instrument of their defeat. The attempt was made. After the lapse of three centuries of ignominy and concealment, a Christian princess remembered the existence of the Holy Cross; she sought for it and found it, and the first Christian emperor erected a splendid temple over the spot where the Cross of shame once stood. Several centuries later another Christian emperor arose, who recovered the Cross from the heathen who had gained possession of it, and carried it in triumph into Jerusalem. This course of events is also typical of the Church herself, whose standard is the Cross, the banner and symbol of her faith. And even more than to banish the Cross from the earth, do the world and the powers of hell strive to consign the Church to darkness and oblivion. But the powers that are on high have amply provided against this contingency. Yet, as the Cross of Christ was not exalted without human instrumentality, the instrumentality of royal personages in fact, so none the more has the Church, the kingdom of Christ, attained its dominion

in this world without the co-operation of a Christian ruler. That this should be so appears to be the will and dispensation of Divine Providence. This power, placed by God in the hands of earthly rulers, is indeed a grand but momentous responsibility. Unhappily in the present day Christian princes betray little eagerness and emulation to merit by their efforts to promote the exaltation of the Church, to become the recipients of the Golden Rose, which it was formerly customary for the Pope to bless and hold in his hand during the ceremonies performed in this basilica on Laetare Sunday—the rose symbolising the joys of the celestial garden in the mystic Jerusalem. All the more ought the people of God to do their part by prayer and sacrifice to promote this object. There is no more noble work than that of advancing the kingdom of God. May the holy Cross once again display as in days of yore its world-subduing might! It is the regal sword of the Most High and works wonders in the hand of man, whether the great ones or the little ones of the earth.

The Church of the Holy Cross at Jerusalem naturally calls to mind Mount Calvary, and this suggests another thought to our mind. At the time of our Lord's death upon the Cross a deep cleft or fissure, as may be seen at the holy sepulchre in Jerusalem, opened in the rock between the Cross of Christ and that of the impenitent thief—a sad emblem of separation from Christ, whether through unbelief, heresy or schism. Let us, therefore, whilst here, intercede for our separated brethren,

as the Church does on Good Friday in presence of the veiled Cross. God grant that the terrible cleft may gradually close; that all mankind may find redemption and rest in Christ, and look forward with holy confidence to the third great exaltation of the Cross! Twice already has the Holy Cross been exalted; the first time when it was raised on Calvary with the Redeemer suspended on it, the second time when Heraclius carried it in triumph, while the third and most glorious exaltation is yet to come, for on the last day it will appear in the heavens when the world shall be judged. Happy those who can anticipate that day without fear!

ST JOHN LATERAN

Immediately upon leaving the Church of the Holy Cross an exceptionally delightful view meets the eye. It is that of the wide, spacious piazza between the Church of the Santa Croce and the Lateran, which, after the piazza of St Peter's, is certainly one of the most notable and imposing squares in the whole world. Close by on the left stands the semicircular ruins of the Amphitheatrum Castrense of Tiberius, the pilasters of the lowest storey are still visible in the interior. The old Aurelian city wall joins the amphitheatre, and stretches away uninterruptedly with its towers and vaulted passages as far as the new Gate of St John, where between groups of verdant trees the battlements of the ancient Porta Asinaria appear, shutting out all further view. On the right the

piazza is bounded by the lofty arches of the old Aqua Claudia, which, decked with luxuriant ivy, pass through the Villa Wolkonski, terminating in the Scala Santa, the picturesque remains of the former Apostolic Palace, consisting of a high gate with gilded niches. The centre of the background is occupied by the Church of the Lateran and the new Apostolic Palace. The rays of the sun, which by this time had risen higher in the heavens, flooded with their brilliant light the piazza, the white walls of the palace, the golden mosaics of the Scala Santa and the Lateran Church, whose façade of choice travertine, arranged in sharp contrasts of light and shade, terminating below on the ground floor in an immense vestibule, whence five doors lead into the nave, and above in a high-arched *loggia* also with five arches, presents a grand and majestic, if somewhat modern, aspect. It was a splendid, solemn, elevating sight, like a bright glimpse of the heavenly Jerusalem, of which the Church is the earthly type. The Lateran was the first public Christian basilica, and became the cathedral of the Roman Pontiff; it claims priority as the Mother and Head of all churches throughout the Catholic world, as the proud inscription on the entablature of the façade declares:

"*Dogmate Papali datur ac simul Imperiali,*
Quod sim cunctarum mater, caput ecclesiarum."

The basilica stands on the site of the Palace of the Laterani, an old Roman clan, a branch of the

plebeian race of the Plautini. The estate was confiscated by Nero, but at a later period restored to its former owners by Septimus Severus. In the beginning of the fourth century it passed into the possession of Fausta, the wife of Constantine, and by her it was given to Pope Sylvester, when it became the papal residence. Constantine built a basilica in one part of the palace. Of this ancient church, greatly enlarged and magnificently decorated by successive popes, little more now remains than the foundation. All the rest has in the course of centuries been sacrificed to the prevalent architectural taste of the period. Thus the Lateran as it exists at present is a vast structure with five aisles separated by pillars, with a beautifully carved and ornamented ceiling over the middle aisle. Only the Gothic roofing of the Confessio and the vast, majestic apse behind the wide transept, adorned with superb mosaics in gold and colours, seems to one a last, lingering ray of the departed glory and splendour of the old basilica, a lament in stone, so to speak, for the magnificent edifice once known by the proud appellation of *Basilica aurea, aula Dei.*

The Lateran, with the adjoining buildings, the beautiful cloister, formerly part of the monastery of the regular canons, the baptistery, the Scala Santa and the chapel called *Sancta Sanctorum*, has been the scene of some of the most memorable historical events in the annals of the Church and of the world. The seat of the papal power was here from the time of Popes Miltiades and Sylvester until the flight to Avignon; it has been the residence of

161 popes, of whom 47 have been canonised; 23 popes have been interred here, amongst them Innocent III., Alexander III., Martin V.; and more recently, Leo XIII. was also laid to rest here; 5 Œcumenical and countless provincial councils have been held here; the great orders of the Middle Ages, the Trinitarians, the Dominicans, the Franciscans, the Praemonstratensians, received the approbation of their rule on this spot; and from hence the most illustrious preachers of the faith in early times, such as Boniface, Augustine, Cyril and Methodius, went forth on their Apostolic mission. The words inscribed on the walls of the Chapel of the Sancta Sanctorum may aptly be applied to the Lateran Church: *Non est in toto sanctior orbe locus.*

Where, if not here, on the spot where for long centuries stood the loom by which the threads of destiny for the Church and the nations were spun, should our thoughts more justly dwell on the kingdom of Christ, the Church? For what else but her prosperity should we more gladly devote our prayers? What may be effected by the prayers of a single individual we learn from the vision of Innocent III., in which he saw the walls of the Lateran totter and rock as if about to fall, but held up and supported by the poor monk St Francis. We too can be stays and pillars of the Church by prayer, the might of which undermines the evil in the world and overthrows it, while it strengthens and upholds what is good and aids it to obtain the mastery.

The pictorial mosaics in the apse represent the Holy Spirit amid rays of light above the Cross hovering over the mountains of Paradise, whence flow streams of water forming, as they descend, the river Jordan, at which the faithful, as sheep and stags, quench their thirst. Children and birds are depicted playing on its flowery banks, while boats filled with joyous persons sail upon its waters—a pretty, pleasing image of the happiness enjoyed by members of the Church, which is also depicted as a city with the phoenix and the palm, safeguarded by angels and Apostles. Separation from the Church dries up these streams of happiness and converts light into darkness. As the Lateran is said to be the mother of all churches, so the Church is the mother of all mankind. He who has not the Church for his mother has not God for his Father; such is the dictum of one of the Doctors of the Church. We know not how desolate and dismal it is to dwell where that mother is not, where her maternal solicitude is wanting. Therefore let us not fail to pray for our separated brethren, that they may find the way of return to their mother's house, their mother's heart.

The mosaics in the Chapel Sancta Sanctorum, over against the Lateran Church, awaken another pleasing reminiscence in our hearts. There, on the left of a group of figures, our Lord is depicted with the Apostles; He is giving the keys to Peter, and to Constantine the imperial standard; while on the right St Peter is conferring the stole on Pope Leo III., and handing the banner to Charlemagne.

On the arch above is the inscription: *Gloria in excelsis Deo et pax hominibus.* Below we read the words: *Beate Petre dona vitam Leoni Papae et victoriam Carolo Regi da.* These were the words of solemn blessing and exultant joy wherewith the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire, the union of the two powers, the Papacy and the Empire of the German nation, was inaugurated and consecrated in St Peter's. It ought to be a pledge of eternal peace and united action between Church and State, between monarchs and their subjects. Would to God that such was the state of things in the present day!

THE CHURCH OF ST SEBASTIAN

Leaving the piazza on the west side of the Lateran Church, to which the baptistery, the great obelisk and the double portico erected by Sixtus V. give so picturesque an appearance, and following a bypath beside the Church of SS. Nereus and Achilleus, we come out upon the Via Appia, and are on the straight road to St Sebastian.

Who that has ever walked along that road can fail to remember with feelings of gentle melancholy, that "Queen of Roads," with its attractive yet stern monuments and fascinating prospect into the far distance? Already to right and left the old sepulchres meet us, for the most part now almost shapeless conical structures, overgrown with ivy, half concealed by a poor rustic dwelling or by

cypresses quivering in the breeze. At the massive towers of the gate of San Sebastian where stand the ruins of the Arch of Drusus, the road descends rapidly to the little river Almo ascending again by the church *Domine quo vadis*, and there where the Via Ardentina branches off, and after passing the catacombs of Praetextatus and St Callixtus, stops short upon a slight eminence beside a very ancient Jewish cemetery. There a valley or glen on the left cuts across the road, and opens out a charming view. On the opposite height across the valley stands the gleaming "Star of the Campagna," the circular sepulchral monument of Cecilia Metella, strongly resembling the tower of a fortress with the adjacent medieval castle of the Gaetani, and beyond the green undulating plains of the Campagna stretch far away to the fair rounded outlines of the Albano mountains where are villas glistening in the sunshine and smiling little towns. On the left, in the depression of the narrow valley, close to the road, stand some fine ruins, the remains of the Villa Suburbana and the racecourse of Masentius, whence popular indignation forced the tyrant to go forth to meet Constantine in battle at the Milvian Bridge; on the right-hand side of the road, where it begins to descend, is the Church of St Sebastian.

It is quite what one would imagine a church commemorating a martyr to be, out in the open country, standing alone, but for a convent beside it. The simple façade of travertine, the portico supported by six Ionic pillars, the interior consisting of a single nave of great width, enriched here and there

with some architectural gems and remains of the former splendour, besides the complete loneliness and isolation of the building, altogether evoke a singular feeling of mysterious awe and sorrowful compassion, a feeling quite in keeping with a martyr's church standing without the walls of the busy city, in the open country. Three several circumstances render it venerable and memorable. In the first place, this basilica marks the spot where the bodies of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul rested, first for the space of forty years, afterwards for a yet longer period, until the beginning of the fourth century. In the year 258, before the commencement of the persecution under Valerian, they were removed from their primitive sepulchre by Sixtus II., for greater safety from the persecutors and perhaps from the hands of over-zealous Christians, and deposited in a catacomb on this spot, which already bore the name of *ad Catacumbas*. Most probably Pope Damasus built a church over the vault where the remains of the Apostles had lain, and called it after them. The site of their interment was about the middle of the fore part of the present basilica, between the altar of relics and the tomb of St Sebastian. This circumstance institutes a close relationship between St Sebastian's Church and the basilicas of SS. Peter and Paul. Some decades of years later, in the reign of Diocletian, St Turania Lucina, who was related on her mother's side to the imperial family, and was the widow of Faltonius Pinianus, the Proconsul of Asia, interred the body of St Sebastian here, and

since the ninth century the church has borne his name. It was rebuilt or restored by several popes, but it owes its present form to Cardinal Scipio Borghese, in the time of Paul V. (1612). The tomb of the holy martyr is situated on the left, opposite the altar of relics. The recumbent statue of the saint, sculptured in white marble, is after Bernini. That is the second noteworthy circumstance; the third is this, that the martyred Pope Fabianus and several other martyrs lie buried here. Beneath the church there are passages belonging to the catacombs, and behind the choir a flight of steps leads to the crypt, a deep semicircular vault lined with masonry, dating from the fifth century and known as Platonia; in this, the tombs of St Quirinius and others are placed in arched recesses in the wall.

As we have already observed, the catacombs of Praetextatus and St Callixtus are in close proximity. Thus, while standing here, we are upon the hallowed ground of the subterranean Christian Rome, the catacombs, the grand scene whereon our Holy Church shed her blood and won her victories. Banished from the face of the earth, deemed unworthy of light and air, she sought a refuge underground, and there erected her altars, carrying with her the mortal remains of her departed children; in the catacombs she prayed, she wept, she hoped; there she deposited in peace whole generations of her children; there a whole army of white-robed martyrs who, in the light of day, boldly confessed Christ before the judges and in the crowded arena,

were laid by her to rest awaiting the day of their future triumph. In this network of dark corridors, sepulchral chambers and altars, extending in the bowels of the earth almost as far and wide as the space covered on its surface by proud, dominant Rome, by silently, unceasingly working and suffering, she undermined, as it were, the fabric of paganism, until, at last, in the fulness of time she emerged from her gloomy dungeon to fulfil her ultimate destiny, to wield the sceptre of universal dominion, while heathen, persecuting Rome descended vanquished into its grave. And here, on the very spot where the faith, the hope, the invincible charity of our Holy Church was so eminently displayed, what countless memories are borne in upon the mind of him who kneels here in prayer, a sharer of her faith, the fortunate heir, born after the lapse of ages, of her hardly won victories.

Above all, our attention is concentrated on the tomb of the glorious martyr whose name is given to this church, and who was one of the most illustrious of the number of the warriors of Christ, St Sebastian. This saint, Commander of the Palace Guard or, as the Acta call him, Commander of the First Praetorian Cohort under Diocletian, was no less good a soldier of the Church than of the emperor. Under cover of his high rank in the secular military service, he protected and encouraged the persecuted Christians and converted many pagans, so that he deserved the appellation given him of a "Defender of the Church." During the persecution under Diocletian, which began by eliminating all Christians

from the army, he suffered martyrdom in the well-known manner about 303 in the reign of Maximian, who was then in Italy, his remains being, as has been already said, deposited in this place beside the bodies of the holy Apostles. Later on, just as if it were for the greater honour of this valiant soldier, the Apostles left this place to him, and the church was known by his name. Nor has the Church herself failed to show the highest respect for her champion, by placing under his patronage the Christian soldier's sodality. Would that in our day he might send into the field a band of brave and able warriors like unto himself, for the defence of the Church! The bodies of the holy martyrs which rest under the altar are a continual, a mighty appeal to God, and a forcible admonition to ourselves never to grow slack in our love for our faith or in loyal affection for Holy Church.

St Sebastian is also a powerful patron in seasons when an epidemic or pestilence prevails. Under certain circumstances it is well to know this. As early as the seventh century and repeatedly in later times, his assistance has been strikingly manifested. There are also spiritual and moral epidemics which certainly are not lacking in the present century. The pestilence of our day is indifference, it is the relaxation of moral force, it is human respect, it is unbelief and erroneous belief. In all these maladies the life, the example and the glorious intercession of our saint are a never-failing means of cure.

One cannot enter the church dedicated to this

martyr without experiencing an increase of love for Christ and for our holy faith. We may really term that a festival of faith which is celebrated yearly at this hallowed spot, in those first days of early spring when in the awakening warmth and increasing brilliance of the January sun the Campagna begins to grow green, when on all the roads pilgrims in festive garb are seen to flock hither, when the quiet, usually deserted sanctuary is decked in festal grandeur, when branches of palm and box strewn on the ground and in the passages fill the air with their aromatic fragrance, and the aisles and vaults re-echo with the selfsame psalms and hymns which, long centuries ago, sounded in the ears of the faithful and of the saints and martyrs now resting below in their last, long sleep, rejoicing, comforting their hearts and raising them to God. The 20th January, the day on which St Sebastian is commemorated, is truly a martyr's feast. One might imagine oneself carried back to the first centuries of Christianity, and the soul of the Christian is inspired with the courage of the martyr, the joy of the confessor.

Would that the saint, who wielded the sword so successfully against the foes of the empire, might give victory to the sword of Christ for the defence and the triumph of our holy faith against external enemies and oppressors. St Sebastian's Church witnessed a triumph such as that for which we wish on the 4th December 1571, when Marc Antonio Colonna, the Commander of the Papal Auxiliary Forces in the War with the Crescent, returned home after the naval victory of Lepanto. Here, in this

church the brilliant triumphant procession was formed before taking its way into the Eternal City, just as in days of yore the victorious eagles of ancient Rome were carried for the offering of thanks and payment of vows into the great Temple of Mars, which stood here in close proximity to the gate of St Sebastian, and whose ruined walls and fallen columns probably furnished a part of the materials employed in the construction of St Sebastian's Church.

ST PAUL'S WITHOUT THE WALLS

Our way to St Paul's takes us quite out into the Campagna, which extending far and wide, forms the solemn, majestic, the only fitting environment of the Eternal City. First of all, on the left hand, where our road is crossed by the Via Ardentina, we meet with the catacomb of the family of martyrs, members of the imperial house of the Flavii, SS. Domitilla, Nereus, Achilleus and Petronilla. The simple basilica, hastily constructed out of the broken masonry of some old building and poorly roofed, strikes us as having a pious though somewhat melancholy aspect. Farther away the eye wanders over wide tracts of open country, the green undulations of the Campagna, in the hollows of which herds of cattle are quietly grazing, while on the low range of hills a deserted watchtower, the ruins of some villa, temple, or sepulchral monument, may here and there be descried; still farther on we can

trace the long lines of the ancient aqueducts, stretching away to the distant mountains, whence in former times they conducted whole rivers into the city. Or again through the iron trelliswork of the gates of some country seat a glimpse is caught of the distant city, whose grey, gloomy walls and massive towers, raised by a people who made war in earnest, encircled it as with a girdle of stone and bronze, rising on the hills, shut out from view all but the domes and steeples of the churches and the upper terraces of the palaces. About halfway a singular little church, with priest's house and garden, calls to mind St Philip Neri, who in the course of his life so often passed this way, and spent night after night in prayer in St Sebastian's. Immediately afterwards the road takes us down into a defile or hollow passage through the tufa rock, charmingly overshadowed by the branches of trees and shrubs, on issuing from which we already descry the Campanile of St Paul's rising above a picturesque graduated tufa hill, abounding in groups of trees and old buildings, while the bells greet us with a festive peal.

The Church of St Paul, a wide, long and majestic structure, externally plain and unornamented, stands between the old Via Ostiensis and the Tiber. To the right, on the other side of the river, the spurs of the Janiculum run down into the plain, on the left, the tower of the basilica rises, behind it the tufa hill ascends precipitously; this with the cavities on the declivity, the old ruins and the dark ilex forest that crown its brow,

forms a picturesque background on one side, while the Tiber, encircling the basilica with its gently flowing waters, shuts in and completes the typical Roman landscape.

On entering the church from the cloisters, one is struck with astonishment at the sight of the vast size of the immense transept, flooded with light and glittering with gold. When viewed from the principal entrance of the nave, the effect produced by the spaciousness is augmented when one looks down the apparently endless rows of granite columns, when one looks up to the wall above the columns of the nave decorated with a series of portraits of the popes, from St Peter downwards, when one looks through the forest of pillars in the twofold side aisles, and still more when one looks beyond the great arch, supported by two pillars of Greek marble, to the wide, lofty apse beautifully decorated with shining mosaics, which constitutes a majestic termination to the grand whole. All around and on every side little else than bright marbles of every colour meet the eye, so that one is almost afraid to walk over the highly polished, magnificent marble floor. The original type and fine effect of a great basilica has been preserved in St Paul's, only it is not hallowed by the prayers of many generations and venerable on account of its antiquity. The over-bright light, which is allowed to stream in on all sides without anything to shade its brilliance, and the obvious traces of modern taste in architecture, which offer a forcible contrast to the severe gravity of the

figures of the Byzantine mosaics above the great arch, have the effect of producing less satisfaction at the artistic harmony, less recollection and devotion than wonder and admiration at the splendour and magnificence of the materials brought together for the embellishment of the edifice. Yet St Paul's is really a basilica, and the sense of vastness is borne in upon one more strongly than by St Peter's, because the eye rests upon the endless succession of pillars and measures by them, whereas in St Peter's the immensity is less apparent and in a certain degree lost behind massive pillars, fewer in number but greater in size, and in the breadth of the side aisles. The cloisters of the monastery adjoining the right transept, of beautiful thirteenth-century work, and the vestibule looking towards the Tiber, exhibit both the glories of medieval art and the splendour of modern architecture.

Here then we stand at the tomb of the Apostle of the Nations. At about two miles' distance from here, in the damp, pleasant valley shaded by tall eucalyptus trees, where stand the stern-looking basilica and the Trappist monastery, on the Via Laurentina and at the well of Aquae Salviae, the Apostle was beheaded, and here he was buried on her estate by St Lucina, a disciple of the Apostle, probably identical with the celebrated Graecina Pomponia mentioned by Tacitus. Many Christians desired to be laid to rest in the vicinity of the great Apostle, and thus it came about that the catacomb of Comodilla was constructed in the

adjacent tufa hill. Constantine built a church over the spot where St Paul was interred; that small basilica was rebuilt on a magnificent scale by Theodosius, Honorius and Galla Placidia, so that its dimensions exceeded those of the old Vatican Basilica of St Peter. For centuries it was the pride of Rome and the goal of innumerable pilgrims, until in 1823, to the consternation of the city and of the whole Catholic world, through an unfortunate accident it was destroyed by fire, and pictures, mosaics, marbles all perished, nothing remaining except the arch of triumph with the ancient mosaics on the south wall. The work of rebuilding was begun and completed at an enormous expense by Pius IX. Thus all Christian centuries have borne their part in rendering the sepulchre of the Apostle glorious and are here represented: the early ages by the great arch, the Middle Ages by the tabernacle over the Confessio, by the cloister and the so-called Martyr's Chapel; and quite recent times by the basilica and portico, reconstructed at great cost and in a style of royal splendour.

Here therefore the heart of St Paul, greater than all the world, was laid to rest after all his journeyings, his labours, his conflicts. In Rome he had achieved the conquest of the world, and nothing remained for him but to die a glorious death for the Church. The heart of the Apostle had unceasingly throbbed with a threefold love: love of the divine Saviour, love of mankind, love of Holy Church. His love for Christ and for his fellow-men was embodied,

expressed, put in practice in his love for the church. The Church is the great mystery, the constant theme of his preaching; to him she is the creation, the fulness of Christ, His body, His bride, nay Christ Himself present in the world, ever living, ever energising, ever suffering, ever triumphing, the pillar and ground of the truth.

This explains his unwearying zeal, his love of work, the joy wherewith he sacrificed himself for the defence, the propagation, the exaltation of Holy Church. His heart knew only one joy, one sorrow, one ambition and one dread, that which would be beneficial or prejudicial to the advancement of the Church, God's Kingdom upon earth. That heart only hated untruth, deceit, self-seeking, half-heartedness in the cause of the Church. After the lapse of ages the heart of the Apostle still speaks to us by his example, by his writings, glowing with ardent love, by his powerful intercession with God. One cannot approach this tomb without inhaling a breath of Apostolic charity.

Whilst we pursue this serious train of thought beside the sepulchre of St Paul, the liturgical hymns sung in the choir by the sons of St Benedict, accompanied by the swelling notes of the organ and the music of the church bells borne on the wings of Easter joy and gladness, echo through the mighty space of the vast basilica, causing our fervent supplication for grace and mercy on behalf of the needs of the Church to be swallowed up in the triumph song of her final, certain victory. Christ's victory over the world

and hell and death is the victory of the Church herself. *Et unam sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam*—how confident, how forcible, how penetrating and elevating these words sound as they issue from the heart and lips of the Catholic at the tomb of St Paul. Let them be our final utterance and the lasting reminiscence of our pilgrimage—love of the Church.

We certainly have many and urgent personal needs. Yet not one of them ought to be more important, more urgent in our estimation than solicitude for the Church's welfare. Of what use would be to us any personal, even spiritual, satisfaction and profit, if the Church, the paternal house in which we live, were in danger and exposed to injury? We rise and fall in and with the Church. Nor is anyone excused on the score of his insignificance from paying his tithe of prayer for the Church. "We can do nothing against the truth, but all for the truth." And the Church is the truth. St Ignatius of Loyola was animated by this thought when, with his companions, here at the tomb of the Apostle of the nations, in the chapel in the bay of the choir, he made his first solemn profession of vows and thereby founded his Order for the defence and propagation of the Church. That was a votive offering worthy of the spot where it was presented, the sepulchre of St Paul. And in our circuit of the churches we have indeed also met with reminiscences and memorials of many saintly women, such as St Cyriaca, St Helen, and the two Lucinas. They were weak, frail

instruments, and served in the Kingdom of Christ only by burying the dead and performing other lowly works of charity. And yet their name, their quiet unobtrusive action, is interwoven in the history of the Church, their work remains, it is before us and we see its glory. All is immortal and great that concerns the Church, every benefaction, every service, every act of love, every prayer! All these make history in the widest sense of the word.

3

Such is the pilgrimage in Rome, the circuit of the seven churches.

It is a quiet, lonely way that we pursue. It lies far apart from the thoroughfares of the busy world, and is little frequented by it. Yet for some portion of the way the world, as it were, reluctantly accompanies us, not parting company with us until the dark cypresses of San Lorenzo are reached. There the tombstone covers all the grandeur and pleasures of the world. Our path also leads to the grave, but it does not end there, it leads beyond it. What was formerly the way of death becomes the way of life, a veritable *Nova via*.

It is a sacred way, along which a countless number of serious, pure, saintly souls have in all ages passed. Who can tell how many holy thoughts, aspirations, elevations of the heart to God have been experienced on this way; how many gracious pledges God has implanted in the souls of some, which later on resulted in incalculable blessings for

the Church and for the world; how much of earth's dust has been shaken off on this way, and how great an increase in purity and sanctity has been acquired. What the Milky Way is in the nightly firmament of heaven, that the route to the seven churches is among the highroads of the Eternal City. It is a sacred and a sanctifying way; a veritable *Sacra via*.

Finally it is a way suggestive of many thoughts, strewn with the most venerable Christian reminiscences, fruitful in profound truths, a true symbol of Rome herself. It begins at the tomb of the first Pope and ends at the resting-place of the greatest of the Apostles. And in the interim the route leads the pilgrim to the crib and the Cross of the Saviour, to one church after another each of which is a sepulchre. But these sepulchres are trophies of life, of victory and of triumph.

Life and death therefore, nay, life arising out of death, this is Rome's import, this is the regular course of Christ's kingdom, this is in fact the sum of human existence. The first form the Christian Church assumed in pagan Rome was that of a burial-place, the catacombs, an immeasurable charnel-house, a very city of the dead, full of mutilated, bloodstained corpses. But when the season of her Passion was past, the day of her resurrection came, Christianity rose from the grave where it had been hidden; and commensurate with the rise of Christianity was the decline of paganism, which sank into the grave that Christianity had prepared for it underground; and on the ruins of the heathen world rose the majestic churches in

memory of the martyrs who, interred secretly in the silence of night, had slept in the grave until, roused from their slumbers, they awoke to dispense the life and blessings of the faith then openly professed. In this respect Rome resembles her typical sister of prophecy, the holy city of Jerusalem. There also a sepulchre was opened when the shades of evening fell at the close of a sadly terrible day, and that sepulchre has outlasted the ancient dismantled city of priests and raised a temple on its ruins, thus converting death's trophy into a monument of life, and casting death itself into the grave. Thus in so wondrous a manner does life continually employ the hand of death to grasp and conquer the earth.

We will conclude by quoting Görres' words: "It is certainly one of the most sublime ideas which the history of mankind sets before us, when we realise the marvellous victory which the Christian faith, defenceless and unarmed, won within the walls of Rome through the mere force of conviction with the assistance of divine grace, over the external power of the world and all her seductive splendour; marvellous as Christianity itself is its history in Rome, if we follow the course of its development and propagation, how in the earliest times those narrow damp vaults, far below the surface of the earth, with their bloodstained corpses, beside which a handful of persecuted Christians prayed and wept, served as a place of refuge and as the first churches, and then how this poor, persecuted, buried Church in the course of centuries

was lifted up and grew and rose higher and higher, until at length all her magnificence was displayed in the gigantic structure of St Peter's, which the genius of Michael Angelo crowned with its lofty dome, one of the boldest achievements of architectural skill, from the summit of which the cross looks down upon the Eternal City.

"Beneath this same dome, and beside the tomb wherein rest the remains of the Apostle whom our Lord chose to be the rock on which He would build His Church, at the very edge of St Peter's grave, stands the *Cathedra Sancti Petri*, the sacred Chair of His representative, of the visible Head of the universal Church, embracing all mankind, as He Himself, the God-man, concealed under the eucharistic veil, is enthroned upon the sepulchral altar of His disciple, on whom He conferred the Power of the keys.

"Thus St Peter's and St Paul's, as all the old churches of Rome, may be called mortuary chapels in the true sense of the word, and the fact that our Christian churches were originally erected over the tombs of the martyrs and saints, those hallowed spots most fitted for offering the unbloody sacrifice of Him to whom those who lay buried there bore witness, exercised a marked influence on ecclesiastical architecture, as the crypts and underground chapels of so many of our most ancient churches still testify. In a certain sense, therefore, not only architectural but Christian art in general, under whatever form it serves to glorify the eternal and divine Lord in His sanctuary, may be termed a

sacred blossom springing from the sepulchre of the martyrs and of Christ their King. In how many instances a great town owes its origin and the monument which is its pride, standing in its midst, to the grave of a saint! Thus in the Middle Ages what gave importance even to Rome herself seemed to be the tombs of the two greatest of the Apostles; for monarchs were wont to journey *ad limina sanctorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli*, to be anointed and invested with their imperial dignity there where in days of yore the Caesars reigned.

"But because paganism had its chief seat in Rome, because it ruled there with imperial might and unequalled splendour, for that very reason the conflict Christianity had to maintain with it was at its fiercest there, and the soil of Rome more than any other was reddened with the blood of martyrs; and since consequently she enclosed within her precincts the largest number of hallowed tombs, for that very reason she was deemed worthy to have the sacred Chair of the Supreme Pontiff set up in her midst, and among the trophies of vanquished paganism, among the ruins of demolished temples, to possess the cathedral of Rome, the metropolitan church of the Christian world, St John Lateran; a basilica, moreover, whose dignity is proclaimed to all who come from afar by the inscription in great gold letters: *Mater et caput omnium ecclesiarum urbis et orbis*."

Thus the tour of the seven churches in Rome is not merely a *Via sacra*, but also in the most glorious sense a veritable *Via triumphalis!*

THE RIVERSIDE PRESS LIMITED, EDINBURGH.

62557